

SAINT PAULS.

NOVEMBER, 1871.

WILFRID CUMBERMEDE.

An Autobiographical Story.

BY GEORGE MAC DONALD, AUTHOR OF "ALEC FORBES," ETC.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DISCLOSURE.

MR. CONINGHAM was at my door by ten o'clock, and we set out together for Umerden Church. It was a cold clear morning. The dying autumn was turning a bright thin defiant face upon the conquering winter. I was in great spirits, my mind being full of Mary Osborne. At one moment I saw but her own ordinary face, only, what I had used to regard as dulness I now interpreted as the possession of her soul in patience; at another I saw the glorified countenance of my Athanasia, knowing that beneath the veil of the other, this, the real, the true face ever lay. Once in my sight, the frost-clung flower had blossomed; in full ideal of glory it had shone for a moment, and then folding itself again away, had retired into the regions of faith. And while I knew that such could dawn out of such, how could I help hoping that from the face of the universe, however to my eyes it might sometimes seem to stare like the seven-days-dead, one morn might dawn the unspeakable face which even Moses might not behold lest he should die of the great sight? The keen air, the bright sunshine, the swift motion—all combined to raise my spirits to an unwonted pitch; but it was a silent ecstasy, and I almost forgot the presence of Mr. Coningham. When he spoke at last, I started.

"I thought from your letter you had something to tell me, Mr. Cumbermede," he said, coming alongside of me.

"Yes, to be sure. I have been reading my grannie's papers as I told you."

I recounted the substance of what I had found in them.

"Does it not strike you as rather strange that all this should have been kept a secret from you?" he asked.

"Very few know anything about their grandfathers," I said; "so I suppose very few fathers care to tell their children about them."

"That is because there are so few concerning whom there is anything worth telling."

"For my part," I returned, "I should think any fact concerning one of those who link me with the infinite past out of which I have come, invaluable. Even a fact which is not to the credit of an ancestor may be a precious discovery to the man who has in himself to fight the evil derived from it."

"That however is a point of view rarely taken. What the ordinary man values is also rare; hence few regard their ancestry, or transmit any knowledge they may have of those who have gone before them to those that come after them."

"My uncle, however, I suppose, told *me* nothing because, unlike the many, he prized neither wealth nor rank nor what are commonly considered great deeds."

"You are not far from the truth there," said Mr. Coningham in a significant tone.

"Then *you* know why he never told me anything!" I exclaimed.

"I do—from the best authority."

"His own, you mean, I suppose."

"I do."

"But—but—I didn't know you were ever—at all—intimate with my uncle," I said.

He laughed knowingly.

"You would say, if you didn't mind speaking the truth, that you thought your uncle disliked me—disapproved of me. Come now—did he not try to make you avoid me? You needn't mind acknowledging the fact, for when I have explained the reason of it, you will see that it involves no discredit to either of us."

"I have no fear for my uncle."

"You are honest, if not over polite," he rejoined. "—You do not feel so sure about my share. Well, I don't mind who knows it, for my part. I roused the repugnance, to the knowledge of which your silence confesses, merely my acting as any professional man ought to have acted—and with the best intentions. At the same time, all the blame I should ever think of casting upon him is, that he allowed his high-strung, saintly, I had almost said superhuman ideas to stand in the way of his nephew's prosperity."

"Perhaps he was afraid of that prosperity standing in the way of a better."

"Precisely so. You understand him perfectly. He was one of the best and simplest-minded men in the world."

"I am glad you do him that justice."

"At the same time I do not think he intended you to remain in absolute ignorance of what I am going to tell you. But you see, he died very suddenly. Besides, he could hardly expect I should hold my tongue after he was gone."

"Perhaps, however, he might expect me not to cultivate your acquaintance," I said, laughing to take the sting out of the words.

"You cannot accuse yourself of having taken any trouble in that direction," he returned, laughing also.

"I believe, however," I resumed, "from what I can recall of things he said, especially on one occasion on which he acknowledged the existence of a secret in which I was interested, he did not intend that I should always remain in ignorance of everything he thought proper to conceal from me then."

"I presume you are right. I think his conduct in this respect arose chiefly from anxiety that the formation of your character should not be influenced by the knowledge of certain facts which might unsettle you, and prevent you from reaping the due advantages of study and self-dependence in youth. I cannot however believe that by being open with you I shall now be in any danger of thwarting his plans, for you have already proved yourself a wise, moderate, conscientious man, diligent and painstaking. Forgive me for appearing to praise you. I had no such intention. I was only uttering as a fact to be considered in the question, what upon my honour I thoroughly believe."

"I should be happy in your good opinion, if I were able to appropriate it," I said. "But a man knows his own faults better than his neighbour knows his virtues."

"Spoken like the man I took you for, Mr. Cumbermede," he rejoined gravely.

"But to return to the matter in hand," I resumed: "what can there be so dangerous in the few facts I have just come to the knowledge of, that my uncle should have cared to conceal them from me? That a man born in humble circumstances should come to know that he had distinguished ancestors, could hardly so fill him with false notions as to endanger his relation to the laws of his existence."

"Of course—but you are too hasty. Those facts are of more importance than you are aware—involve other facts. Moldwarp Hall is *your* property and not Sir Giles Brotherton's."

"Then the apple was my own after all!" I said to myself exultingly. It was a strange fantastic birth of conscience and memory, —forgotten the same moment, and followed by an electric flash—not of hope, not of delight, not of pride, but of pure revenge. My whole frame quivered with the shock; yet for a moment I seemed to have the strength of a Hercules. In front of me was a stile through a

high hedge: I turned Lilith's head to the hedge, struck my spurs into her, and over or through it, I know not which, she bounded. Already, with all the strength of will I could summon, I struggled to rid myself of the wicked feeling; and although I cannot pretend to have succeeded for long after, yet by the time Mr. Coningham had popped over the stile, I was waiting for him, to all appearance, I believe, perfectly calm. He on the other hand, from whatever cause, was actually trembling. His face was pale, and his eye flashing. Was it that he had roused me more effectually than he had hoped?

"Take care, take care, my boy," he said, "or you won't live to enjoy your own. Permit me the honour of shaking hands with Sir Wilfrid Cumbermede Daryll."

After this ceremonial of prophetic investiture, we jogged away quietly, and he told me a long story about the death of the last proprietor, the degree in which Sir Giles was related to him, and his undisputed accession to the property. At that time, he said, my father was in very bad health, and indeed died within six months of it.

"I knew your father well, Mr. Cumbermede," he went on, "—one of the best of men, with more spirit—more ambition than your uncle. It was *his* wish that his child, if a boy, should be called Wilfrid,—for though they had been married five or six years, their only child was born after his death. Your uncle did not like the name, your mother told me, but made no objection to it. So you were named after your grandfather, and great grandfather, and I don't know how many of the race besides.—When the last of the Darylls died——"

"Then," I interrupted, "my father was the heir."

"No; you mistake: your uncle was the elder—Sir David Cumbermede Daryll, of Moldwarp Hall and The Moat," said Mr. Coningham, evidently bent on making the most of my rights.

"He never even told me he was the eldest," I said. "I always thought from his coming home to manage the farm when my father was ill—that he was the second of the two sons."

"On the contrary, he was several years older than your father—so that you mustn't suppose he kept you back from any of your rights. They were his, not yours, while he lived."

"I will not ask," I said, "why he did not enforce them. That is plain enough from what I know of his character. The more I think of that, the loftier and simpler it seems to grow. He could not bring himself to spend the energies of a soul meant for higher things on the assertion and recovery of earthly rights."

"I rather differ from you there; and I do not know," returned my companion, whose tone was far more serious than I had ever heard it before, "whether the explanation I am going to offer, will raise your uncle as much in your estimation as it does in mine. I confess I do not rank such self-denial as you attribute to him so highly as

you do. On the contrary I count it a fault. How could the world go on if every body was like your uncle?"

"If every body was like my uncle, he would have been forced to accept the position," I said; "for there would have been no one to take it from him."

"Perhaps. But you must not think Sir Giles knew anything of your uncle's claim. He knows nothing of it now."

I had not thought of Sir Giles in connection with the matter—only of Geoffrey; and my heart recoiled from the notion of dispossessing the old man, who, however misled with regard to me at last, had up till then shown me uniform kindness. In that moment I had almost resolved on taking no steps till after his death. But Mr. Coningham soon made me forget Sir Giles in a fresh revelation of my uncle.

"Although," he resumed, "all you say of your uncle's indifference to this world and its affairs is indubitably correct, I do not believe, had there not been a prospect of your making your appearance, that he would have shirked the duty of occupying the property which was his both by law and by nature. But he knew it might be an expensive suit—for no one can tell by what tricks of the law such may be prolonged—in which case all the money he could command would soon be spent, and nothing left either to provide for your so-called aunt, for whom he had a great regard, or to give you that education, which, whether you were to succeed to the property or not, he counted indispensable. He cared far more, he said, about your having such a property in yourself as was at once personal and real, than for your having any amount of property out of yourself. Ex-postulation was of no use. I had previously learned—from the old lady herself—the true state of the case, and, upon the death of Sir Geoffrey Daryll, had at once communicated with him—which placed me in a position for urging him, as I did again and again, considerably to his irritation, to assert and prosecute his claim to the title and estates. I offered to take the whole risk upon myself; but he said that would be tantamount to giving up his personal liberty until the matter was settled, which might not be in his lifetime. I may just mention, however, that besides his religious absorption, I strongly suspect there was another cause of his indifference to worldly affairs: I have grounds for thinking that he was disappointed in a more than ordinary attachment to a lady he met at Oxford—in station considerably above any prospects he had then. To return: he was resolved that whatever might be your fate, you should not have to meet it without such preparation as he could afford you. As you have divined, he was most anxious that your character should have acquired some degree of firmness before you knew any thing of the possibility of your inheriting a large property and historical name; and I may appropriate the credit of a negative share in the carrying out of his plans, for you will bear

me witness how often I might have upset them by informing you of the facts of the case."

"I am heartily obliged to you," I said, "for not interfering with my uncle's wishes, for I am very glad indeed that I have been kept in ignorance of my rights until now. The knowledge would at one time have gone far to render me useless for personal effort in any direction worthy of it. It would have made me conceited, ambitious, boastful: I don't know how many bad adjectives would have been necessary to describe me."

"It is all very well to be modest, but I venture to think differently."

"I should like to ask you one question, Mr. Coningham," I said.

"As many as you please."

"How is it that you have so long delayed giving me the information which on my uncle's death you no doubt felt at liberty to communicate?"

"I did not know how far you might partake of your uncle's disposition, and judged that the wider your knowledge of the world, and the juster your estimate of the value of money and position, the more willing you would be to listen to the proposals I had to make."

"Do you remember," I asked, after a canter, led off by my companion, "one very stormy night on which you suddenly appeared at the Moat, and had a long talk with my uncle on the subject?"

"Perfectly," he answered. "But how did you come to know? He did not tell you of my visit!"

"Certainly not. But, listening in my nightgown on the stair, which is open to the kitchen, I heard enough of your talk to learn the object of your visit—namely, to carry off my skin to make bagpipes with."

He laughed so heartily that I told him the whole story of the pendulum.

"On that occasion," he said, "I made the offer to your uncle, on condition of his sanctioning the commencement of legal proceedings, to pledge myself to meet every expense of those and of your education as well, and to claim nothing whatever in return, except in case of success."

This quite corresponded with my own childish recollections of the interview between them. Indeed there was such an air of simple straightforwardness about his whole communication, while at the same time it accounted so thoroughly for the warning my uncle had given me against him, that I felt I might trust him entirely, and so would have told him all that had taken place at the Hall, but for the share his daughter had borne in it, and the danger of discovery to Mary.

CHAPTER I.

THE DATES.

I HAVE given, of course, only an epitome of our conversation, and by the time we had arrived at this point, we had also reached the gate of the churchyard. Again we fastened up our horses; again he took the key from under the tombstone; and once more we entered the dreary little church, and drew aside the curtain of the vestry. I took down the volume of the register. The place was easy to find, seeing, as I have said, it was at the very end of the volume.

The copy I had taken was correct: the date of the marriage in the register was January 15, and it was the first under the 1748, written at the top of the page. I stood for a moment gazing at it; then my eye turned to the entry before it, the last on the preceding page. It bore the date December, 13—under the general date at the top of the page, 1747. The next entry after it was dated March 29. At the bottom of the page, or cover rather, was the attestation of the clergyman to the number of marriages in that year; but there was no such attestation at the bottom of the preceding page. I turned to Mr. Coningham, who had stood regarding me, and, pointing to the book, said—

“Look here, Mr. Coningham. I cannot understand it. Here the date of the marriage is 1748; and that of all their letters, evidently written after the marriage, is 1747.”

He looked, and stood looking, but made me no reply. In my turn I looked at him. His face expressed something not far from consternation; but the moment he became aware that I was observing him, he pulled out his handkerchief, and wiping his forehead with an attempt at a laugh, said—

“How hot it is! Yes; there’s something awkward there. I hadn’t observed it before. I must inquire into that. I confess I cannot explain it all at once. It does certainly seem queer. I must look into those dates when I go home.”

He was evidently much more discomposed than he was willing I should perceive. He always spoke rather hurriedly, but I had never heard him stammer before. I was certain that he saw or at least dreaded something fatal in the discrepancy I had pointed out. As to looking into it when he got home, that sounded very like nonsense. He pulled out a note-book, however, and said:

“I may just as well make a note of the blunder—for blunder it must be—a very awkward one indeed, I am afraid. I should think so—I cannot—But then——”

He went on uttering disjointed and unfinished expressions, while he made several notes. His manner was of one who regards the action he is about as useless, yet would have it supposed the right thing to do.

"There!" he said, shutting up his note-book with a slam; and turning away he strode out of the place—much, it seemed to me, as if his business there was over for ever. I gave one more glance at the volume, and replaced it on the shelf. When I rejoined him, he was already mounted and turning to move off.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Coningham," I said. "I don't exactly know where to put the key."

"Fling it under the gravestone, and come along," he said, muttering something more, in which perhaps I only fancied I heard certain well-known maledictions.

By this time my spirits had sunk as much below their natural level as, a little before, they had risen above it. But I felt that I must be myself, and that no evil any more than good fortune ought for a moment to perturb the tenor of my being. Therefore having locked the door deliberately and carefully, I felt about along the underside of the gravestone until I found the ledge where the key had lain. I then made what haste I could to mount and follow Mr. Coningham, but Lilith delayed the operation by her eagerness. I gave her the rein, and it was well no one happened to be coming in the opposite direction through that narrow and tortuous passage, for she flew round the corners—"turning close to the ground, like a cat when scratchingly she wheels about after a mouse," as my old favourite Sir Philip Sidney says. Notwithstanding her speed, however, when I reached the mouth of the lane, there was Mr. Coningham half across the first field, with his coat-tails flying out behind him. I would not allow myself to be left in such a discourteous fashion, and gave chase. Before he had measured the other half of the field, I was up with him.

"That mare of yours is a clever one," he said, as I ranged alongside of him. "I thought I would give her a breather. She hasn't enough to do."

"She's not breathing so *very* fast," I returned. "Her wind is as good as her legs."

"Let's get along then, for I've lost a great deal of time this morning. I ought to have been at Squire Strode's an hour ago. How hot the sun is, to be sure, for this time of the year!"

As he spoke, he urged his horse, but I took and kept the lead, feeling, I confess, a little angry, for I could not help suspecting he had really wanted to run away from me. I did what I could, however, to behave as if nothing had happened. But he was very silent, and his manner towards me was quite altered. Neither could I help thinking it scarcely worthy of a man of the world, not to say a lawyer, to show himself so much chagrined. For my part, having simply concluded that the new-blown bubble-hope had burst, I found myself just where I was before—with a bend sinister on my scutcheon,

it might be, but with a good conscience, a tolerably clear brain, and the dream of my Athanasia.

The moment we reached the road, Mr. Coningham announced that his way was in the opposite direction to mine, said his good morning, shook hands with me, and jogged slowly away. I knew that was not the nearest way to Squire Strode's.

I could not help laughing—he had so much the look of a dog with his tail between his legs, or a beast of prey that had made his spring and missed his game. I watched him for some time, for Lilith being pulled both ways—towards home, and after her late companion—was tolerably quiescent, but he never cast a glance behind him. When at length a curve in the road hid him from my sight, I turned and went quietly home, thinking what the significance of the unwelcome discovery might be. If the entry of the marriage under that date could not be proved a mere blunder, of which I could see no hope, then certainly my grandfather must be regarded as born out of wedlock, a supposition which, if correct, would account for the dropping of the *Daryll*.

On the way home, I jumped no hedges.

Having taken my farewell of Lilith, I packed my "bag of needments," locked the door of my uncle's room, which I would have no one enter in my absence, and set out to meet the night mail.

CHAPTER LI.

CHARLEY AND CLARA.

ON my arrival in London, I found Charley waiting for me, as I had expected; and with his help, soon succeeded in finding, in one of the streets leading from the Strand to the river, the accommodation I wanted. There I settled, and resumed the labour so long and thanklessly interrupted.

When I recounted the circumstances of my last interview with Mr. Coningham, Charley did not seem so much surprised at the prospect which had opened before me as disappointed at its sudden close, and would not admit that the matter could be allowed to rest where it was.

"Do you think the change of style could possibly have anything to do with it?" he asked, after a meditative silence.

"I don't know," I replied. "Which change of style do you mean?"

"I mean the change of the beginning of the year from March to January," he answered.

"When did that take place?" I asked.

"Some time about the middle of the last century," he replied; "but I will find out exactly."

The next night he brought me the information that the January which according to the old style would have been that of 1752 was promoted to be the first month of the year 1753.

My dates then were, by several years, antecedent to the change, and it was an indisputable anachronism that the January between the December of 1747 and the March of 1748, should be entered as belonging to the latter year. This seemed to throw a little dubious light upon the perplexity: the January thus entered belonged clearly to 1747, and therefore was the same January with that of my ancestors' letters. Plainly, however, the entry could not stand in evidence, its interpolation at least appearing indubitable, for how otherwise could it stand at the beginning of the new year instead of towards the end of the old, five years before the change of style? Also, I now clearly remembered that it did look a little crushed between the heading of the year and the next entry. It must be a forgery—and a stupid one as well, seeing the bottom of the preceding page, where there was a small blank, would have been the proper place to choose for it—that is, under the heading 1747. Could the 1748 have been inserted afterwards? That did not appear likely, seeing it belonged to all the rest of the entries on the page, there being none between the date in question and March 29, on the 25th of which month the new year began. The conclusion lying at the door was, that some one had inserted the marriage so long after the change of style that he knew nothing of the trap there lying for his forgery. It seemed probable that, blindly following the letters, he had sought to place it in the beginning of the previous year, but, getting bewildered in the apparent eccentricities of the arrangement of month and year, or, perhaps, finding no other blank suitable to his purpose, had at last drawn his bow at a venture. Neither this nor any other theory I could fashion, did I however find in the least satisfactory. All I could be sure of was, that here was no evidence of the marriage—on the contrary a strong presumption against it.

For my part, the dream in which I had indulged had been so short that I very soon recovered from the disappointment of the waking therefrom. Neither did the blot with which the birth of my grandfather was menaced, affect me much. My chief annoyance in regard of that aspect of the affair was in being *so* related to Geoffrey Brotherton.

I cannot say how it came about, but I could not help observing that, by degrees, a manifest softening appeared in Charley's mode of speaking of his father, although I knew that there was not the least approach to a more cordial intercourse between them. I attributed the change to the letters of his sister, which he always gave me to read. From them I have since classed her with a few others I have since known, chiefly women, the best of their kind, so good and so large-minded that they seem ever on the point of casting aside

the unworthy opinions they have been taught, and showing themselves the true followers of him who cared only for the truth; and yet holding by the doctrines of men, and believing them to be the mind of God.

In one or two of Charley's letters to her, I ventured to insert a question or two, and her reference to these in her replies to Charley, gave me an opportunity of venturing to write to her more immediately, in part defending what I thought the truth, in part expressing all the sympathy I honestly could with her opinions. She replied very kindly, very earnestly, and with a dignity of expression as well as of thought which harmonized entirely with my vision of her deeper and grander nature.

The chief bent of my energies was now to vindicate for myself a worthy position in the world of letters; but my cherished hope lay in the growth of such an intimacy with Mary Osborne as might afford ground for the cultivation of far higher and more precious ambitions.

It was not however with the design of furthering these that I was now guilty of what will seem to most men a Quixotic action enough.

"Your sister is fond of riding—is she not?" I asked Charley one day, as we sauntered with our cigars on the terrace of the Adelphi.

"As fond as one can possibly be who has had so little opportunity," he said.

"I was hoping to have a ride with her and Clara the very evening when that miserable affair occurred. The loss of that ride was at least as great a disappointment to me as the loss of the sword."

"You seem to like my sister, Wilfrid," he said.

"At least I care more for her good opinion than I do for any woman's—or man's either, Charley."

"I am so glad!" he responded. "You like her better than Clara then?"

"Ever so much," I said.

He looked more pleased than annoyed, I thought—certainly neither the one nor the other entirely. His eyes sparkled, but there was a flicker of darkness about his forehead.

"I am very glad," he said again, after a moment's pause. "I thought—I was afraid—I had fancied sometimes—you were still a little in love with Clara."

"Not one atom," I returned. "She cured me of that quite. There is no danger of that any more," I added—foolishly, seeing I intended no explanation.

"How do you mean?" he asked, a little uneasily.

I had no answer ready, and a brief silence followed. The subject was not resumed.

It may well seem strange to my reader that I had never yet informed him of the part Clara had had in the matter of the sword.

But, as I have already said, when anything moved me very deeply, I was never ready to talk about it. Somehow, whether from some thing of the cat-nature in me, I never liked to let go my hold of it without good reason. Especially I shrunk from imparting what I only half comprehended; and besides, in the present case, the thought of Clara's behaviour was so painful to me still, that I recoiled from any talk about it—the more that Charley had a kind and good opinion of her, and would I knew only start objections and explanations defensive, as he had done before on a similar occasion, and this I should have no patience with. I had therefore hitherto held my tongue. There was, of course, likewise the fear of betraying his sister, only the danger of that was small, now that the communication between the two girls seemed at an end for the time; and if it had not been that a certain amount of mutual reticence had arisen between us, first on Charley's part and afterwards on mine, I doubt much whether, after all, I should not by this time have told him the whole story. But the moment I had spoken as above, the strangeness of his look, which seemed to indicate that he would gladly request me to explain myself but for some hidden reason, flashed upon me the suspicion that he was himself in love with Clara. The moment the suspicion entered, a host of circumstances crystallized around it. Fact after fact flashed out of my memory, from the first meeting of the two in Switzerland down to this last time I had seen them together, and in the same moment I was convinced that the lady I saw him with in the Regent's Park was no other than Clara. But if it were so, why had he shut me out from his confidence? Of the possible reasons which suggested themselves, the only one which approached the satisfactory was, that he had dreaded hurting me by the confession of his love for her, and preferred leaving it to Clara to cure me of a passion to which my doubtful opinion of her gave a probability of weakness and ultimate evanescence.

A great conflict awoke in me. What ought I to do? How could I leave him in ignorance of the falsehood of the woman he loved? But I could not make the disclosure now. I must think about the how and the how much to tell him. I returned to the subject which had led up to the discovery.

"Does your father keep horses, Charley?"

"He has a horse for his parish work, and my mother has an old pony for her carriage."

"Is the rectory a nice place?"

"I believe it is, but I have such painful associations with it, that I hardly know."

The Arab loves the desert sand where he was born; the thief loves the court where he used to play in the gutter. How miserable Charley's childhood must have been! How *could* I tell him of Clara's falsehood?

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"Why doesn't he give Mary a pony to ride?" I asked. "But I suppose he hasn't room for another."

"Oh yes, there's plenty of room. His predecessor was rather a big fellow. In fact, the stables are on much too large a scale for a clergyman. I daresay he never thought of it. I must do my father the justice to say there's nothing stingy about him, and I believe he loves my sister even more than my mother. It certainly would be the best thing he could do for her to give her a pony. But she will die of religion—young, and be sainted in a twopenny tract, and that is better than a pony. Her hair doesn't curl—that's the only objection. Some one has remarked that all the good children who die have curly hair."

Poor Charley! Was his mind more healthy then? Was he less likely to come to an early death? Was his want of faith more life-giving than what he considered her false faith?

"I see no reason to fear it," I said, with a tremor at my heart as I thought of my dream.

That night I was sleepless—but about Charley—not about Mary. What could I do?—what ought I to do? Might there be some mistake in my judgment of Clara? I searched, and I believe searched honestly, for any possible mode of accounting for her conduct that might save her uprightness, or mitigate the severity of the condemnation I had passed upon her. I could find none. At the same time, what I was really seeking was an excuse for saying nothing to Charley. I suspect now that had I searched after justification or excuse for her from love to herself, I might have succeeded in constructing a theory capable of sheltering her; but as it was, I failed utterly; and turning at last from the effort, I brooded instead upon the Quixotic idea already adverted to, grown the more attractive as offering a good excuse for leaving Charley for a little.

CHAPTER LII.

LILITH MEETS WITH A MISFORTUNE.

THE next day, leaving a note to inform Charley that I had run home for a week, I set out for the moat, carrying with me the best side-saddle I could find in London.

As I left the inn at Minstercombe in a gig, I saw Clara coming out of a shop. I could not stop and speak to her, for, not to mention the opinion I had of her, and the treachery of which I accused her, was I not at that very moment meditating how best to let her lover know that she was not to be depended upon? I touched the horse with the whip, and drove rapidly past. Involuntarily, however, I glanced behind, and saw a white face staring after me. Our looks encountering thus, I lifted my hat, but held on my course.

I could not help feeling very sorry for her. The more falsely she had behaved, she was the more to be pitied. She looked very beautiful with that white face. But how different was her beauty from that of my Athanasia!

Having tried the side-saddle upon Lilith, and found all it wanted was a little change in the stuffing about the withers, I told Styles to take it and the mare to Minsterecombe the next morning, and have it properly fitted.

What trifles I am lingering upon! Lilith is gone to the worms—no, that I *do not* believe: amongst the things most people believe, and I cannot, that is one; but at all events she is dead, and the saddle gone to worms; and yet, for reasons which will want no explanation to my one reader, I care to linger even on the fringes of this part of the web of my story.

I wandered about the field and house, building and demolishing many an airy abode, until Styles came back. I had told him to get the job done at once, and not return without the saddle.

"Can I trust you, Styles?" I said abruptly.

"I hope so, sir. If I may make so bold, I don't think I was altogether to blame about that book——"

"Of course not. I told you so. Never think of it again. Can you keep a secret?"

"I can try, sir. You've been a good master to me, I'm sure, sir."

"That I mean to be still, if I can. Do you know the parish of Spurdene?"

"I was born there, sir."

"Ah! that's not so convenient. Do you know the rectory?"

"Every stone of it, I may say, sir."

"And do they know you?"

"Well, it's some years since I left—a mere boy, sir."

"I want you then—if it be possible—you can tell best—to set out with Lilith to-morrow night—I hope it will be a warm night. You must groom her thoroughly, put on the side saddle and her new bridle, and lead her—you're not to ride her, mind—I don't want her to get hot—lead her to the rectory of Spurdene—and—now here is the point—if it be possible, take her up to the stable, and fasten her by this silver chain to the ring at the door of it—as near morning as you safely can to avoid discovery, for she mustn't stand longer at this season of the year than can be helped. I will tell you all.—I mean her for a present to Miss Osborne; but I do not want anyone to know where she comes from. None of them, I believe, have ever seen her. I will write something on a card, which you will fasten to one of the pommels, throwing over all this horse-cloth."

I gave him a fine bear-skin I had bought for the purpose. He

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smiled, and with evident enjoyment of the spirit of the thing, promised to do his best.

Lilith looked lovely as he set out with her, late the following night. When he returned the next morning, he reported that everything had succeeded admirably. He had carried out my instructions to the letter; and my white Lilith had by that time, I hoped, been caressed, possibly fed, by the hands of Mary Osborne herself.

I may just mention that on the card I had written—or rather printed the words: "To Mary Osborne, from a friend."

In a day or two, I went back to London, but said nothing to Charley of what I had done—waiting to hear from him first what they said about it.

"I say, Wilfrid!" he cried, as he came into my room with his usual hurried step, the next morning but one, carrying an open letter in his hand, "what's this you've been doing—you sly old fellow? You ought to have been a prince, by Jove!"

"What do you accuse me of? I must know that first, else I might confess to more than necessary. One must be on one's guard with such as you."

"Read that," he said, putting the letter into my hand.

It was from his sister. One passage was as follows:

"A strange thing has happened. A few mornings ago, the loveliest white horse was found tied to the stable door, with a side-saddle, and a card on it directed to *me*. I went to look at the creature. It was like the witch-lady in *Christabel*, 'beautiful exceedingly.' I ran to my father, and told him. He asked me who had sent it, but I knew no more than he did. He said I couldn't keep it unless we found out who had sent it, and probably not then, for the proceeding was as suspicious as absurd. To-day he has put an advertisement in the paper to the effect that if the animal is not claimed before, it will be sold at the horse-fair next week, and the money given to the new school fund. I feel as if I couldn't bear parting with it, but of course I can't accept a present without knowing where it comes from. Have you any idea who sent it? I am sure papa is right about it, as indeed, dear Charley, he always is."

I laid down the letter, and, full of mortification, went walking about the room.

"Why didn't you tell me, Wilfrid?"

"I thought it better, if you were questioned, that you should not know. But it was a foolish thing to do—very. I see it now. Of course your father is right. It doesn't matter though. I will go down and buy her."

"You had better not appear in it. Go to the Moat, and send Styles."

"Yes—that will be best. Of course it will. When is the fair, do you know?"

"I will find out for you. I hope some rascal mayn't in the meantime take my father in, and persuade him to give her up. Why shouldn't I run down and tell him, and get back poor Lilith without making you pay for your own?"

"Indeed you shan't. The mare is your sister's, and I shall lay no claim to her. I have money enough to redeem her."

Charley got me information about the fair, and the day before it I set out for the Moat.

When I reached Minstercombe, having more time on my hands than I knew what to do with, I resolved to walk round by Spurdene. It would not be more than ten or twelve miles, and so I should get a peep of the rectory. On the way I met a few farmer-looking men on horseback, and just before entering the village, saw at a little distance a white creature—very like my Lilith—with a man on its back, coming towards me.

As they drew nearer, I was certain of the mare, and, thinking it possible the rider might be Mr. Osborne, withdrew into a thicket on the roadside. But what was my dismay to discover that it was indeed my Lilith, but ridden by Geoffrey Brotherton! As soon as he was past, I rushed into the village, and found that the people I had met were going from the fair. Charley had been misinformed. I was too late: Brotherton had bought my Lilith. Half distracted with rage and vexation, I walked on and on, never halting till I reached the Moat. Was this man destined to swallow up every thing I cared for? Had he suspected me as the foolish donor, and bought the mare to spite me? A thousand times rather would I have had her dead. Nothing on earth would have tempted me to sell my Lilith but inability to feed her, and then I would rather have shot her. I felt poorer than even when my precious folio was taken from me, for the lowest animal life is a greater thing than a rare edition. I did not go to bed at all that night, but sat by my fire or paced about the room till dawn, when I set out for Minstercombe, and reached it in time for the morning coach to London. The whole affair was a folly, and I said to myself that I deserved to suffer. Before I left, I told Styles, and begged him to keep an eye on the mare, and if ever he learned that her owner wanted to part with her, to come off at once and let me know. He was greatly concerned at my ill-luck, as he called it, and promised to watch her carefully. He knew one of the grooms, he said, a little, and would cultivate his acquaintance.

I could not help wishing now that Charley would let his sister know what I had tried to do for her, but of course I would not say so. I think he did tell her, but I never could be quite certain whether or not she knew it. I wonder if she ever suspected me. I think not. I have too good reason to fear that she attributed to another the would-be gift: I believe that from Brotherton's buying

her, they thought he had sent her—a present certainly far more befitting his means than mine. But I came to care very little about it, for my correspondence with her, through Charley, went on. I wondered sometimes how she could keep from letting her father know: that he did not know I was certain, for he would have put a stop to it at once. I conjectured that she had told her mother, and that she, fearing to widen the breach between her husband and Charley, had advised her not to mention it to him; while, believing it would do both Charley and me good, she did not counsel her to give up the correspondence. It must be considered also that it was long before I said a word implying any personal interest. Before I ventured that, I had some ground for thinking that my ideas had begun to tell upon hers, for, even in her letters to Charley, she had begun to drop the common religious phrases, while all she said seemed to indicate a widening and deepening and simplifying of her faith. I do not for a moment imply that she had consciously given up one of the dogmas of the party to which she belonged, but there was the perceptible softening of growth in her utterances; and after that was plain to me, I began to let out my heart to her a little more.

About this time also I began to read once more the history of Jesus, asking myself as if on a first acquaintance with it, "Could it be—might it not be that, if there were a God, he would visit his children after some fashion? If so, is this a likely fashion? May it not even be the only right fashion?" In the story I found at least a perfection surpassing everything to be found elsewhere; and I was at least sure that whatever this man said must be true. If one could only be as sure of the record! But if ever a dawn was to rise upon me, here certainly the sky would break; here I thought I already saw the first tinge of the returning life-blood of the swooning world. The gathering of the waters of conviction at length one morning broke out in the following verses, which seemed more than half given to me, the only effort required being to fit them rightly together:—

Come to me, come to me, O my God;
Come to me everywhere!
Let the trees mean thee, and the grassy sod,
And the water and the air.

For thou art so far that I often doubt,
As on every side I stare,
Searching within, and looking without,
If thou art anywhere.

How did men find thee in days of old?
How did they grow so sure?
They fought in thy name, they were glad and bold,
They suffered, and kept themselves pure.

But now they say—neither above the sphere.
Nor down in the heart of man,

Wilfrid Cumbermede.

But only in fancy, ambition, or fear,
The thought of thee began.

If only that perfect tale were true
Which with touch of sunny gold,
Of the ancient many makes one anew,
And simplicity manifold.

But *he* said that they who did his word,
The truth of it should know :
I will try to do it—if he be Lord,
Perhaps the old spring will flow ;

Perhaps the old spirit-wind will blow
That he promised to their prayer ;
And doing thy will, I yet shall know
Thee, Father, everywhere !

These lines found their way without my concurrence into a certain religious magazine, and I was considerably astonished, and yet more pleased one evening when Charley handed me, with the kind regards of his sister, my own lines, copied by herself. I speedily let her know they were mine, explaining that they had found their way into print without my cognizance. She testified so much pleasure at the fact, and the little scraps I could claim as my peculiar share of the contents of Charley's envelopes, grew so much more confiding, that I soon ventured to write more warmly than hitherto. A period longer than usual passed before she wrote again, and when she did she took no express notice of my last letter. Foolishly or not, I regarded this as a favourable sign, and wrote several letters, in which I allowed the true state of my feelings towards her to appear. At length I wrote a long letter in which, without a word of direct love-making, I thought yet to reveal that I loved her with all my heart. It was chiefly occupied with my dream on that memorable night—of course without the slightest allusion to the waking, or anything that followed. I ended abruptly, telling her that the dream often recurred, but as often as it drew to its lovely close, the lifted veil of Athanasia revealed ever and only the countenance of Mary Osborne.

The answer to this came soon, and in few words.

"I dare not take to myself what you write. That would be presumption indeed, not to say wilful self-deception. It will be honour enough for me if in any way I serve to remind you of the lady of your dream. Wilfrid, if you love me, take care of my Charley. I must not write more.—M. O."

It was not much, but enough to make me happy. I write it from memory—every word as it lies where any moment I could read it—shut in a golden coffin whose lid I dare not open.

CHAPTER LIII.

TOO LATE.

I MUST now go back a little. After my suspicions had been aroused as to the state of Charley's feelings, I hesitated for a long time before I finally made up my mind to tell him the part Clara had had in the loss of my sword. But while I was thus restrained by dread of the effect the disclosure would have upon him if my suspicions were correct, those very suspicions formed the strongest reason for acquainting him with her duplicity; and, although I was always too ready to put off the evil day so long as doubt supplied excuse for procrastination, I could not have let so much time slip by and nothing said, but for my absorption in Mary.

At length, however, I had now resolved, and one evening, as we sat together, I took my pipe from my mouth, and, shivering bodily, thus began:

"Charley," I said, "I have had for a good while something on my mind, which I cannot keep from you longer."

He looked alarmed instantly. I went on.

"I have not been quite open with you about that affair of the sword."

He looked yet more dismayed; but I must go on, though it tore my very heart. When I came to the point of my overhearing Clara talking to Brotherton, he started up, and without waiting to know the subject of their conversation, came close up to me, and, his face distorted with the effort to keep himself quiet, said, in a voice hollow and still and far off, like what one fancies of the voice of the dead,

"Wilfrid, you said Brotherton, I think?"

"I did, Charley."

"She never told me that!"

"How could she when she was betraying your friend?"

"No, no!" he cried, with a strange mixture of command and entreaty; "don't say that. There is some explanation. There *must* be."

"She told me she hated him," I said.

"I know she hates him. What was she saying to him?"

"I tell you she was betraying me, your friend, who had never done her any wrong, to the man she had told me she hated, and whom I had heard her ridicule."

"What do you mean by betraying you?"

I recounted what I had overheard. He listened with clenched teeth and trembling white lips; then burst into a forced laugh.

"What a fool I am! Distrust *her*! I will not. There is some explanation! There *must* be!"

The dew of agony lay thick on his forehead. I was greatly alarmed at what I had done, but I could not blame myself.

"Do be calm, Charley," I entreated.

"I am as calm as death," he replied, striding up and down the room with long strides.

He stopped and came up to me again.

"Wilfrid," he said, "I am a damned fool. I am going now. Don't be frightened—I am perfectly calm. I will come and explain it all to you to-morrow—no—the next day—or the next at latest. She had some reason for hiding it from me, but I shall have it all the moment I ask her. She is not what you think her. I don't for a moment blame you—but—are you sure it was—Clara's—voice you heard?" he added with forced calmness and slow utterance.

"A man is not likely to mistake the voice of a woman he ever fancied himself in love with."

"Don't talk like that, Wilfrid. You'll drive me mad. How should *she* know you had taken the sword?"

"She was always urging me to take it. There lies the main sting of the treachery. But I never told you where I found the sword."

"What can that have to do with it?"

"I found it on my bed that same morning when I woke. It could not have been there when I lay down."

"Well?"

"Charley, I believe *she* laid it there."

He leaped at me like a tiger. Startled, I jumped to my feet. He laid hold of me by the throat, and griped me with a quivering grasp. Recovering my self-possession I stood perfectly still, making no effort even to remove his hand, although it was all but choking me. In a moment or two, he relaxed his hold, burst into tears, took up his hat, and walked to the door.

"Charley! Charley! you must *not* leave me so," I cried, starting forwards.

"To-morrow, Wilfrid; to-morrow," he said, and was gone.

He was back before I could think what to do next. Opening the door half way, he said—as if a gripping hand had been on *his* throat—

"I—I—I—don't believe it, Wilfrid. You only said you believed it. I don't. Good night. I'm all right now. *Mind, I don't believe it.*"

He shut the door. Why did I not follow him? But if I had followed him, what could I have said or done? In every man's life come awful moments when he must meet his fate—dree his weird—alone. Alone, I say, if he have no God—for man or woman cannot aid him, cannot touch him, cannot come near him. Charley was now in one of those crises, and I could not help him. Death is counted an awful thing: it seems to me that life is an infinitely more awful thing.

In the morning I received the following letter.

"DEAR MR. CUMBERMEDE,

"You will be surprised at receiving a note from me—still more at its contents. I am most anxious to see you—so much so that I venture to ask you to meet me where we can have a little quiet talk. I am in London, and for a day or two sufficiently my own mistress to leave the choice of time and place with you—only let it be when and where we shall not be interrupted. I presume on old friendship in making this extraordinary request, but I do not presume in my confidence that you will not misunderstand my motives. One thing only I *beg*—that you will not inform C. O. of the petition I make.

"Your old friend,
"C. C."

What was I to do? To go, of course. She *might* have something to reveal which would cast light on her mysterious conduct. I cannot say I expected a disclosure capable of removing Charley's misery, but I did vaguely hope to learn something that might alleviate it. Anyhow, I would meet her, for I dared not refuse to hear her. To her request of concealing it from Charley, I would grant nothing beyond giving it quarter until I should see whither the affair tended. I wrote at once—making an appointment for the same evening. But was it from a suggestion of Satan, from an evil impulse of human spite, or by the decree of fate, that I fixed on that part of the Regent's Park in which I had seen him and the lady I now believed to have been Clara walking together in the dusk? I cannot now tell. The events which followed have destroyed all certainty, but I fear it was a flutter of the wings of revenge, a shove at the spokes of the wheel of time to hasten the coming of its circle.

Anxious to keep out of Charley's way—for the secret would make me wretched in his presence—I went into the City, and, after an early dinner, sauntered out to the Zoological Gardens, to spend the time till the hour of meeting. But there, strange to say, whether from insight or fancy, in every animal face I saw such gleams of a troubled humanity, that at last I could bear it no longer, and betook myself to Primrose Hill.

It was a bright afternoon, wonderfully clear, with a crisp frosty feel in the air. But the sun went down, and, one by one, here and there, above and below, the lights came out and the stars appeared, until at length sky and earth were full of flaming spots, and it was time to seek our rendezvous.

I had hardly reached it, when the graceful form of Clara glided towards me. She perceived in a moment that I did not mean to shake hands with her. It was not so dark but that I saw her bosom heave, and a flush overspread her countenance.

"You wished to see me, Miss Coningham," I said. "I am at your service."

"What is wrong, Mr. Cumbermede? You never used to speak to me in such a tone."

"There is nothing wrong if you are not more able than I to tell what it is."

"Why did you come if you were going to treat me so?"

"Because you requested it."

"Have I offended you then by asking you to meet me? I trusted you. I thought *you* would never misjudge me."

"I should be but too happy to find I had been unjust to you, Miss Coningham. I would gladly go on my knees to you to confess that fault, if I could only be satisfied of its existence. Assure me of it, and I will bless you."

"How strangely you talk? Some one has been maligning me."

"No one. But I have come to the knowledge of what only one besides yourself could have told me."

"You mean——"

"Geoffrey Brotherton."

"*He!* He has been telling you——"

"No—thank heaven! I have not yet sunk to the slightest communication with *him*."

She turned her face aside. Veiled as it was by the gathering gloom she yet could not keep it towards me. But after a brief pause she looked at me and said,

"You know more than—I do not know what you mean."

"I do know more than you think I know. I will tell you under what circumstances I came to such knowledge."

She stood motionless.

"One evening," I went on, "after leaving Moldwarp Hall with Charles Osborne, I returned to the library to fetch a book. As I entered the room where it lay I heard voices in the armoury. One was the voice of Geoffrey Brotherton—a man you told me you hated. The other was yours."

She drew herself up, and stood stately before me.

"Is that your accusation?" she said. "Is a woman never to speak to a man because she detests him?"

She laughed I thought drearily.

"Apparently not—for then I presume you would not have asked me to meet you."

"Why should you think I hate *you*?"

"Because you have been treacherous to me."

"In talking to Geoffrey Brotherton? I do hate him. I hate him more than ever. I spoke the truth when I told you that."

"Then you do not hate me?"

"No."

"And yet you delivered me over to my enemy bound hand and foot, as Delilah did Samson.—I heard what you said to Brotherton."

She seemed to waver, but stood—speechless, as if waiting for more.

"I heard you tell him that I had taken that sword—the sword you had always been urging me to take—the sword you unsheathed and laid on my bed that I might be tempted to take it—why I cannot understand, for I never did you a wrong to my poor knowledge. I fell into your snare, and you made use of the fact you had achieved to ruin my character, and drive me from the house in which I was foolish enough to regard myself as conferring favours rather than receiving them. You have caused me to be branded as a thief for taking—at your suggestion—that which was and still is my own!"

"Does Charley know this?" she asked, in a strangely altered voice.

"He does. He learned it yesterday."

"O my God!" she cried, and fell kneeling on the grass at my feet. "Wilfrid! Wilfrid! I will tell you all. It was to tell you all about this very thing that I asked you to come. I could not bear it longer. Only your tone made me angry. I did not know you knew so much."

The very fancy of such submission from such a creature would have thrilled me with a wild compassion once; but now I thought of Charley and felt cold to her sorrow as well as her loveliness. When she lifted her eyes to mine, however—it was not so dark but I could see their sadness—I began to hope a little for my friend. I took her hand and raised her. She was now weeping with down-bent head.

"Clara, you shall tell me all. God forbid I should be hard upon you. But you know I cannot understand it. I have no clue to it. How could you serve me so?"

"It is very hard for me—but there is no help now: I must confess disgrace, in order to escape infamy. Listen to me then—as kindly as you can, Wilfrid. I beg your pardon; I have no right to use any old familiarity with you. Had my father's plans succeeded, I should still have had to make an apology to you, but under what different circumstances! I will be as brief as I can. My father believed you the rightful heir to Moldwarp Hall. Your own father believed it, and made my father believe it—that was in case your uncle should leave no heir behind him. But your uncle was a strange man, and would neither lay claim to the property himself, nor allow you to be told of your prospects. He did all he could to make you like himself, indifferent to worldly things; and my father feared you would pride yourself on refusing to claim your rights except some counter-influence were used."

"But why should your father have taken any trouble in the matter?" I asked.

"Well, you know—one in his profession likes to see justice done; and, besides, to conduct such a case must of course be of professional advantage to him. You must not think him under obligation to the present family: my grandfather held the position he still occupies before they came into the property.—I am too unhappy to mind what I say now. My father was pleased when you and I—indeed I fancy he had a hand in our first meeting. But while your uncle lived, he had to be cautious. Chance, however, seemed to favour his wishes. We met more than once, and you liked me, and my father thought I might wake you up to care about your rights, and—and—but—"

"I see. And it might have been, Clara, but for—"

"Only, you see, Mr. Cumbermede," she interrupted with a half-smile, and a little return of her playful manner—"I didn't wish it."

"No. You preferred the man who *had* the property."

It was a speech both cruel and rude. She stepped a pace back, and looked me proudly in the face.

"Prefer that man to *you*, Wilfrid! No. I could never have fallen so low as that. But I confess I didn't mind letting papa understand that Mr. Brotherton was polite to me—just to keep him from urging me to—to— You *will* do me the justice that I did not try to make you—to make you—care for me, Wilfrid?"

"I admit it heartily. I will be as honest as you, and confess that you might have done so—easily enough at one time. Indeed I am only half honest after all: I loved you once—after a boyish fashion." She half-smiled again.

"I am glad you are believing me now," she said.

"Thoroughly," I answered. "When you speak the truth, I must believe you."

"I was afraid to let papa know the real state of things. I was always afraid of him, though I love him dearly, and he is very good to me. I dared not disappoint him by telling him that I loved Charley Osborne. That time—you remember—when we met in Switzerland, his strange ways interested me so much! I was only a girl—but—"

"I understand well enough. I don't wonder at any woman falling in love with my Charley."

"Thank you," she said, with a sigh which seemed to come from the bottom of her heart. "You were always generous. You will do what you can to right me with Charley—won't you? He is very strange sometimes."

"I will indeed. But, Clara, why didn't Charley let *me* know that you and he loved each other?"

"Ah! there my shame comes in again! I wanted—for my father's

sake, not for my own—I need not tell you that—I wanted to keep my influence over you a little while—that is until I could gain my father's end. If I should succeed in rousing you to enter an action for the recovery of your rights, I thought my father might then be reconciled to my marrying Charley instead—"

"Instead of me, Clara. Yes—I see. I begin to understand the whole thing. It's not so bad as I thought—not by any means."

"Oh, Wilfrid! how good of you! I shall love you next to Charley all my life."

She caught hold of my hand, and for a moment seemed on the point of raising it to her lips.

"But I can't easily get over the disgrace you have done me, Clara. Neither, I confess, can I get over your degrading yourself to a private interview with such a beast as I know—and can't help suspecting you knew Brotherton to be."

She dropped my hand, and hid her face in both her own.

"I did know what he was; but the thought of Charley made me able to go through with it."

"With the sacrifice of his friend to his enemy?"

"It was bad. It was horridly wicked. I hate myself for it. But you know I thought it would do you no harm in the end."

"How much did Charley know of it all?" I asked.

"Nothing whatever. How could I trust his innocence? He's the simplest creature in the world, Wilfrid."

"I know that well enough."

"I could not confess one atom of it to him. He would have blown up the whole scheme at once. It was all I could do to keep him from telling you of our engagement; and that made him miserable."

"Did you tell him I was in love with you? You knew I was, well enough."

"I dared not do that," she said, with a sad smile. "He would have vanished—would have killed himself to make way for you."

"I see you understand him, Clara."

"That will give me some feeble merit in your eyes—won't it, Wilfrid?"

"Still I don't see quite why you betrayed me to Brotherton. I daresay I should if I had time to think it over."

"I wanted to put you in such a position with regard to the Brothertons that you could have no scruples in respect of them such as my father feared from what he called the over-refinement of your ideas of honour. The treatment you must receive would, I thought, rouse every feeling against them. But it was not *all* for my father's sake, Wilfrid. It was, however mistaken, yet a good deal for the sake of Charley's friend that I thus disgraced myself. Can you believe me?"

"I do. But nothing can wipe out the disgrace to me."

"The sword was your own. Of course I never for a moment doubted that."

"But they believed I was lying."

"I can't persuade myself it signifies greatly what such people think about you. I except Sir Giles. The rest are——"

"Yet you consented to visit them."

"I was in reality Sir Giles's guest. Not one of the others would have asked me."

"Not Geoffrey?"

"I owe *him* nothing but undying revenge for Charley."

Her eyes flashed through the darkness, and she looked as if she could have killed him.

"But you were plotting against Sir Giles all the time you were his guest?"

"Not unjustly though. The property was not his, but yours—that is, as we then believed. As far as I knew, the result would have been a real service to him, in delivering him from unjust possession—a thing he would himself have scorned. It was all very wrong—very low, if you like—but somehow it then seemed simple enough—a lawful stratagem for the right."

"Your heart was so full of Charley!"

"Then you do forgive me, Wilfrid?"

"With all my soul. I hardly feel now as if I had anything to forgive."

I drew her towards me and kissed her on the forehead. She threw her arms round me, and clung to me, sobbing like a child.

"You will explain it all to Charley—won't you?" she said, as soon as she could speak, withdrawing herself from the arm which had involuntarily crept around her, seeking to comfort her.

"I will," I said.

We were startled by a sound in the clump of trees behind us. Then over their tops passed a wailful gust of wind, through which we thought came the fall of receding footsteps.

"I hope we haven't been overheard," I said. "I shall go at once and tell Charley all about it. I will just see you home first."

"There's no occasion for that, Wilfrid; and I'm sure I don't deserve it."

"You deserve a thousand thanks. You have lifted a mountain off me. I see it all now. When your father found it was no use——"

"Then I saw I had wronged you, and I couldn't bear myself till I had confessed all."

"Your father is satisfied then that the register would not stand in evidence?"

"Yes. He told me all about it."

"He has never said a word to me on the matter; but just dropped me in the dirt, and let me lie there."

"You must forgive him too, Wilfrid. It was a dreadful blow to him, and it was weeks before he told me. We couldn't think what was the matter with him. You see he had been cherishing the scheme ever since your father's death, and it was a great humiliation to find he had been sitting so many years on an addled egg," she said, with a laugh in which her natural merriment once more peeped out.

I walked home with her, and we parted like old friends.

On my way to the Temple, I was anxiously occupied as to how Charley would receive the explanation I had to give him. That Clara's confession would be a relief I could not doubt; but it must cause him great pain notwithstanding. His sense of honour was so keen, and his ideal of womankind so lofty, that I could not but dread the consequences of the revelation. At the same time I saw how it might benefit him. I had begun to see that it is more divine to love the erring than to love the good, and to understand how there is more joy over the one than over the ninety and nine. If Charley, understanding that he is no divine lover who loves only so long as he is able to flatter himself that the object of his love is immaculate, should find that he must love Clara in spite of her faults and wrong-doings, he might thus grow to be less despairful over his own failures; he might, through his love for Clara, learn to hope for himself, notwithstanding the awful distance at which perfection lay removed.

But as I went I was conscious of a strange oppression. It was not properly mental, for my interview with Clara had raised my spirits. It was a kind of physical oppression I felt, as if the air, which was in reality clear and cold, had been damp and close and heavy.

I went straight to Charley's chambers. The moment I opened the door, I knew that something was awfully wrong. The room was dark—but he would often sit in the dark. I called him, but received no answer. Trembling, I struck a light, for I feared to move lest I should touch something dreadful. But when I had succeeded in lighting the lamp, I found the room just as it always was. His hat was on the table. He must be in his bedroom. And yet I did not feel as if anything alive was near me. Why was everything so frightfully still? I opened the door as slowly and fearfully as if I had dreaded arousing a sufferer whose life depended on his repose. There he lay on his bed, in his clothes—fast asleep, as I thought, for he often slept so, and at any hour of the day—the natural relief of his much-perturbed mind. His eyes were closed, and his face was very white. As I looked, I heard a sound—a drop—another! There was a slow drip somewhere. God in heaven! Could it be? I rushed to him, calling him aloud. There was no response. It was too true! He was dead. The long snake-like Indian dagger was in his heart, and the blood was oozing slowly from around it.

I dare not linger over that horrible night, or the horrible days that followed. Such days! such nights! The letters to write!—The friends to tell!—Clara!—His father!—The police!—The inquest!

* * * * *

Mr. Osborne took no notice of my letter, but came up at once. Entering where I sat with my head on my arms on the table, the first announcement I had of his presence was a hoarse deep broken voice ordering me out of the room. I obeyed mechanically, took up Charley's hat instead of my own, and walked away with it. But the neighbours were kind, and although I did not attempt to approach again all that was left of my friend, I watched from a neighbouring window, and following at a little distance, was present when they laid his form, late at night, in the unconsecrated ground of a cemetery.

I may just mention here what I had not the heart to dwell upon in the course of my narrative—that since the talk about suicide occasioned by the remarks of Sir Thomas Browne, he had often brought up the subject—chiefly however in a half-humorous tone, and from what may be called an æsthetic point of view as to the best mode of accomplishing it. For some of the usual modes he expressed abhorrence, as being so ugly; and on the whole considered—I well remember the phrase, for he used it more than once—that a dagger—and on one of those occasions he took up the Indian weapon already described and said—"such as this now,"—was "the most gentleman-like usher into the presence of the Great Nothing." As I had however often heard that those who contemplated suicide never spoke of it, and as his manner on the occasions to which I refer was always merry, such talk awoke little uneasiness; and I believe that he never had at the moment any conscious attraction to the subject stronger than a speculative one. At the same time, however, I believe that the speculative attraction itself had its roots in the misery with which in other and prevailing moods he was so familiar.

CHAPTER LIV.

ISOLATION.

AFTER writing to Mr. Osborne to acquaint him with the terrible event, the first thing I did was to go to Clara. I will not attempt to describe what followed. The moment she saw me, her face revealed, as in a mirror, the fact legible on my own, and I had scarcely opened my mouth when she cried "He is dead!" and fell fainting on the floor. Her aunt came, and we succeeded in recovering her a little. But she lay still as death on the couch where we had laid her, and the motion of her eyes hither and thither as if following the movements of some one about the room was the only sign of life in

her. We spoke to her, but evidently she heard nothing; and at last, leaving her when the doctor arrived, I waited for her aunt in another room, and told her what had happened.

Some days after, Clara sent for me, and I had to tell her the whole story. Then, with agony in every word she uttered, she managed to inform me that when she went in after I left her at the door that night, she found waiting her a note from Charley; and this she now gave me to read. It contained a request to meet him that evening at the very place which I had appointed. It was their customary rendezvous when she was in town. In all probability he was there when we were, and heard and saw—heard too little and saw too much, and concluded that both Clara and I were false to him. The frightful perturbation which a conviction such as that must cause in a mind like his could be nothing short of madness. For, ever tortured by a sense of his own impotence, of the gulf to all appearance eternally fixed between his actions and his aspirations, and unable to lay hold of the Essential, the Causing Goodness, he had clung with the despair of a perishing man to the dim reflex of good he saw in her and me. If his faith in that was indeed destroyed, the last barrier must have given way, and the sea of madness ever breaking against it, must have broken in and overwhelmed him. But, O my friend! surely long ere now thou knowest that we were not false; surely the hour will yet dawn when I shall again hold thee to my heart; yea, surely, even if still thou countest me guilty, thou hast already found for me endless excuse and forgiveness.

I can hardly doubt however that he inherited a strain of madness from his father, a madness which that father had developed by forcing upon him the false forms of a true religion.

It is not then strange that I should have thought and speculated much about madness.—What does its frequent impulse to suicide indicate? May it not be its main instinct to destroy itself as an evil thing? May not the impulse arise from some unconscious conviction that there is for it no remedy but the shuffling off of this mortal coil—nature herself dimly urging through the fumes of the madness to the one blow which lets in the light and air? Doubtless, if in the mind so sadly unhinged, the sense of a holy Presence could be developed—the sense of a love that loves through all vagaries—of a hiding place from forms of evil the most fantastic—of a fatherly care that not merely holds its insane child in its arms, but enters into the chaos of his imagination, and sees every wildest horror with which it swarms; if, I say, the conviction of such a love dawned on the disordered mind, the man would live in spite of his imaginary foes, for he would pray against them as sure of being heard as St. Paul, when he prayed concerning the thorn from which he was not delivered, but against which he was sustained. And who can tell how often this may be the fact—how often the lunatic also lives by faith? Are

not the forms of madness most frequently those of love and religion? Certainly, if there be a God, he does not forget his frenzied offspring; certainly he is more tender over them than any mother over her idiot darling; certainly he sees in them what the eye of brother or sister cannot see. But some of them at least have not enough of such support to be able to go on living; and for my part, I confess I rejoice as often as I hear that one has succeeded in breaking his prison-bars. When the crystal shrine has grown dim, and the fair forms of nature are in their entrance contorted hideously; when the sunlight itself is as blue lightning, and the wind in the summer trees is as "a terrible sound of stones cast down, or a rebounding echo from the hollow mountains"; when the body is no longer a mediator between the soul and the world, but the prison-house of a lying gaoler and torturer—how can I but rejoice to hear that the tormented captive has at length forced his way out into freedom?

When I look behind me, I can see but little through the surging lurid smoke of that awful time. The first sense of relief came when I saw the body of Charley laid in the holy earth. For the earth is the Lord's—and none the less holy that the voice of the priest may have left it without his consecration. Surely if ever the Lord laughs in derision, as the Psalmist says, it must be when the voice of a man would in *his* name exclude his fellows from their birthright. O Lord, gather thou the outcasts of thy Israel, whom the priests and the rulers of thy people have cast out to perish.

I remember for the most part only a dull agony, interchanging with apathy. For days and days I could not rest, but walked hither and thither, careless whither. When at length I would lie down weary and fall asleep, suddenly I would start up, hearing the voice of Charley crying for help, and rush in the middle of the winter night into the wretched streets, there to wander till daybreak. But I was not utterly miserable. In my most wretched dreams I never dreamed of Mary, and through all my waking distress I never forgot her. I was sure in my very soul that she did me no injustice. I had laid open the deepest in me to her honest gaze, and she had read it, and could not but know me. Neither did what had occurred quench my growing faith. I had never been able to hope much for Charley in this world; for something was out of joint with him, and only in the region of the unknown was I able to look for the setting right of it. Nor had many weeks passed before I was fully aware of relief when I remembered that he was dead. And whenever the thought arose that God might have given him a fairer chance in this world, I was able to reflect that apparently God does not care for this world save as a part of the whole; and on that whole I had yet to discover that he could have given him a fairer chance.

MYTHS AND FAIRY TALES.

THE great difficulty in the way of a scientific treatment of fairy lore and supernatural tradition lies in the abundance of materials of different kinds and co-ordinate authority at our command. The comparative mythologist may begin his studies at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the chain of popular belief, and in either case, if he is disposed to treat the subject seriously, he will find nearly employment for a lifetime in clearing one portion of the ground for future speculation. The myth, the saga, and the fairy tale are undoubtedly related, and they stand in the scale of antiquity approximately in the order mentioned; but the descent of one from the other is by no means unbroken, and the common element running through them all, which is what makes them form branches of the same study, only reveals itself to those who are already thoroughly familiar with each in particular. Thus the earliest period of mythological growth with which we are acquainted is that presented by the Vedas and the Zend Avesta, works barely intelligible to scholars who study nothing else, whilst the comparative mythologist can only use them to profit on condition of possessing, in addition, a general knowledge of the earliest sacred books of other nations, and a more minute familiarity with the ethnological considerations which determine the age and degree of independence belonging to each. The normal or typical course of religious thought amongst the Aryan races, for instance, must be reconstructed before we can assign their right position in the scale of development to the mythology of Greece or Scandinavia; and this can scarcely be done without the help of comparisons derived from the mythology of more backward races, which again entails the inquiry what is religious and primitive, what legendary, and what fantastic in their individual beliefs. Thus one question leads to another, and the answers which would add most to our knowledge, and lead to the most fruitful results, are the last which we can arrive at with any degree of confidence.

The saga, or heroic legend, standing midway between the myth, which vanishes into the shades of the past, and the fairy tale, which loses itself in the frivolity of the present, is also perforce a study apart: in the first place, because of the exceeding voluminousness of its literature—Iliad, Shah Nameh, Nibelungen Lied, Chant de Roland—all the works of what may be called *applied* mythology, produced in the inevitable chivalrous Middle Age of each nation; and

secondly, because each separate legendary cycle has to be submitted to historical criticism, to see that no crumbs of fact are inadvertently left amongst the residuum destined to pass into the mythologic crucible. The epic or ballad literature which has grown up around the names of Rama, Rustem, Sigurd and Siegfried, Charlemagne, Arthur, Diarmid and Fionn, or the Cid, must all be taken into account for the secondary period of mythological development; and in some ways, perhaps, this branch of comparative mythology may be looked upon as the most advanced. Even here, however, it would take the heroic industry of a Grimm to catalogue the substantial results arrived at by all who have laboured independently in this field, which is certainly far too wide to be entered upon in a magazine article; especially as these heroic legends, just because we seem to know most about them, are of really less interest for the history of thought than the obscure birth of natural religion or the despised utterances of its decrepitude.

We have no intention of entering into such wide questions as the origin of supernatural creeds, or the share which astronomical or metaphysical ideas, theological sentiments, and elemental experiences may have had in their formation. Without going below the surface of things, we find a mass of fiction common to almost the whole human race, and, therefore, we are compelled to suppose, based, in some inscrutable way, upon universal instincts and tendencies, which modern science must penetrate, or make a shameful confession of incompetence. But the task before the comparative mythologist is not so simple as some professors of the study seem to imagine. It would not be enough to have suggested an interpretation for one set of popular traditions, even though an exhaustive examination of the subject should make it apparent that every other form taken by myth or legend could ultimately be reduced to a derivative of the first. Comparative philology had only just begun when it was discovered that Sanskrit and Greek were kindred tongues, and that the type of modern European languages could be studied to best advantage in Hindustan. It remained to be shown, and the process is still in its earliest stages, how, and so far as possible, when and where, the languages which are now distinct branched off from each other, or from an older parent stem. The laws of linguistic change had to be ascertained, verified in those periods when the historian could check the conclusions of grammar, and then applied, with care and diffidence, to the remoter ages in which philology has no more trustworthy auxiliaries than geology or the other infant science now under discussion. Granting for a moment—what is doubtful—that all myths were originally solar or elemental, little has been gained until we are in possession of trustworthy data, showing by what laws the extant variations on the primitive theme were produced, and which ideas are peculiar to or characteristic of which nation or group of nations. The folk lore of one country at different periods, or of different

countries at the same period, ought to be compared, and instead of sinking all that is individual or characteristic in different legendary cycles, until Little Red Riding Hood and Achilles are the same person, a sound analysis would assign a separate place to every detail, however trifling, which was really primitive and irreducible. If materials were collected in this spirit, we should soon be able to assign as distinct a value to the fables told by any set of peasants as to the roots and numerals of their language, in fixing the affinities and history of their ancestors. In such matters guesses and *à priori* reasoning are worse than useless, because the appearance of complete knowledge discourages research; and, as Mr. Tylor admirably observes in his "Primitive Culture," after a very plausible "solar" interpretation of the "Song of Sixpence"—"Mere possibility in mythological speculation is now seen to be such a worthless commodity, that every investigator wishes there was not such plenty of it." What may mean anything is that much nearer meaning nothing; but as comparative mythology is really a science with a future, we have to discover, if possible, some "Grimm's law" which may serve to restrain the wanton exercise of explanatory ingenuity. Meanwhile it ought to be a fixed principle that no interpretation, however tempting, should be admitted to more than provisional toleration till some external evidence has been adduced in its support.

The author of "Mythology of the Aryan Nations" sometimes offends against this rule, at least to the extent of withholding the confirmatory proof which, perhaps, may be in his possession. One example will be enough of this tantalizing habit, common to most elementalists, of taking for granted without comment what would be very instructive indeed if only it were true. Everybody knows the story of the boy who wanted to learn to shiver, which, in the version given by Grimm, ends comically, with a maid-servant's pouring a pail of water from the brook, with all its slimy inmates, over him. According to Mr. Cox, the stupid boy "is no more able to shiver than the sun," and only learns "when Helios plunges into the sea as Endymion." Now, it would be rash to say that this catastrophe is *not* primitive, because the serious and the grotesque often mingle in these stories in a way that baffles calculation; but when we have to choose between Mr. Cox's supposition that the vivid sensible images of an elaborate allegory have been preserved for eight or ten centuries after its significance was lost, and the more obvious view, that some matter-of-fact German dame did not like a story without an ending, there are arguments on both sides which ought to be expressed. There is no doubt that fairy tales are occasionally distorted by wanton, that is, meaningless inventions; and the Germans have been a reading people so long that the value of oral tradition is less with them than in almost any other country. Still, the intrusive elements can generally be detected by a comparison of the dominant idea,

which constitutes the core and centre of the myth, with the co-ordinate forms taken by it in different countries. Now in Grimm's story there are, as it were, two *motives*—the humorous notion of a person wishing to acquire by art a power which those who possess it would gladly dispense with, and a cluster of adventures typical of absolute fearlessness. Too much importance must not be attached to the word "gruseln," which is by no means essential to the story, for in many versions the youth sets forth "das Fürchte-mich zu lernen," because he so often hears people say, "I'm afraid," and does not know what they mean. Of course the sun may be conceived as fearless as well as hot, but the story in its most complete shape is met with in comparatively few of the excellent collections of popular tales which have been made of late years in all parts of Europe; and the nearest parallel to the ending, on which Mr. Cox builds so much, is that offered by stories of a very different type, where the princess, who has been enamoured of a wicked magician, is disenchanted when her husband has plunged her thrice into a tub of water, from which she rises the first time as a raven, the second time as a dove, and at last in her proper shape. Of course this may be taken as a story of solar infidelity with the sexes reversed, but we may just as well suppose a reference to the rite of baptism, for the tub of water in Andersen and a German version from the Hartz district, is wanting in old Eastern forms of the tale.

We find the story at full in Sicily in the fairy tales collected from oral tradition by Fraülein Gonzenbach, where the hero is chiefly remarkable for not being afraid of churchyards and corpses, while the tone of the story seems to imply that such extreme don't-care-ism is almost irreligious. Grimm knows of no modern French equivalent; but the legend had taken this turn in the romances about Richard sans Peur, current as late as the seventeenth century, and certainly as early as the thirteenth. Here it is the devils who are piqued by Richard's reputation for fearlessness, and try in a variety of ways to take him unawares. One evil spirit assumes the shape of a baby, which Richard finds in a wood, and grows up into a girl on purpose that it may marry him, pretend to die, and frighten him as he is watching by the corpse. Brudemort (so the sprite is called) is disappointed in this deep-laid plot, and after several other failures, the powers of darkness abandon their attempts, and Richard and his ex-spouse remain the best of friends. We may observe, parenthetically, that the episode of a corpse which rises, vampire-like, to devour the watchers, is found again in some recently published Venetian fairy tales, and no doubt belongs to a time when the duty of watching by the dead was held to be both necessary, as, according to Apuleius, in Thessaly, and dangerous, as when all these tests of courage were invented. The story was once known in Tyrol, as Zingerle, who professes to follow his authorities literally, speaks in a short tale

called "Die weisse Geis" of a poacher, "der das Fürchten nicht gelernt hatte," but the incidents are generally vulgarised into mere ghost stories, with a local habitation, in which, moreover, the dread-nought adventurer gets the worst of it at the hands of the spirits. We may perhaps also connect the Lithuanian story of a wager between the devil, Perkunas (the Lithuanian god), and a carpenter, as to which should succeed in frightening the other two, but the details are dissimilar. In Campbell's "Tales of the Western Highlands," we have the adventures of the fearless hero, but without the previously expressed wish to learn what fear is, and joined to another group of stories by the hero's triumph over the devil, here called the Mischief, who is decoyed into a bag and belaboured by threshers and blacksmiths. Some of the same incidents are met with in Arnason's "Icelandic Tales," and faint reminiscences may be recognised in Chambers's "Nursery Rhymes of Scotland." But, on the whole, it seems as if the "learning to shiver" was not the popular part of the legend, and there is certainly a refinement about the idea which may account for its dropping out of the common fireside version. In China, however, we find it again stripped of all irrelevant incidents: a king (in Stanislas Julien's "Avadanas") has heard of Misfortune, and wishes to know what she is like; he offers one hundred thousand pieces of gold for the privilege of making her acquaintance, and in return she ravages his country and reduces him to misery. Here the moral is obvious; but the germ of the apologue must have been a popular saying or anecdote, like the legendary basis of the stories in the "Gesta Romanorum," a work to which the "Avadanas" bear the strongest resemblance, in the perverse ingenuity with which they extract sweetness from the strong, and edification from the most unpromising myths. But to return to Grimm and Mr. Cox: the conclusion of the bucket of cold water is by no means general in the stories which resemble each other in their remaining features. If the myth is to be solar, the version to be preferred is certainly one in which the princess pushes her unreasonable bridegroom off a bridge into the water; but the number, as well as the character of the different variations, seems rather to point to falsification or invention. Of all the attempts to manufacture an end for a story which, to our thinking, requires none, the worst is certainly one of Grimm's variants, which makes the hero take fright at the firing of a cannon; and perhaps the best a northern version, in which his head is cut off, and then put on hind part before, an operation which might easily upset the strongest nerves. It would be tedious to follow out the analysis of the different proofs of courage given in all these stories, though a strictly scientific treatment demands that we should distinguish them into three groups, according as they are most akin to the common heroic type of exploit, to the prudent wit of the valiant tailor, or to the humorous and sometimes malignant

blundering of the popular fool. We have said enough to show that the solar character of any part of the legend remains to be established, and that the weight of presumption is decidedly against such a character for the whole of its late German form.

The study of these fragmentary remains of what was once mythology may follow either of two directions without falling into the snare of over hasty generalisations. Contemporary fairy tales, in other words, may be investigated either *secundum esse* or *secundum fieri*, critically, in connection with their natural sense, and logical antecedents, by the analysis of their actual elements, or historically in relation to their date, origin, and present external form. The only serious attempt, so far as we are aware, which has been made in the first of these directions, is due to Johann Georg von Hahn, who has endeavoured to classify the modern Greek and Albanian fairy tales collected by himself. The principal fault to be found with his arrangement is that he seems to have been guided rather too much by such accidental features as the relationship of the characters, or the presence of particular incidents which are not an essential part of the framework of the story. It would be ungrateful to complain, when he has made so promising a beginning, that he has not gone further and tried to group together those stories which were originally akin in meaning as well as those which have a present resemblance; if this were done, the masses of fiction, in which three sons, and seven daughters, and twelve brothers, kings, princesses, quadrupeds, and strange carnivora are mixed together till the reader's brain turns giddy, might be reduced to a manageable number of types, each of which might then, if the needful learning and patience were forthcoming, be carried back to the idea which presided over its birth 4,000 years ago in central Asia, or longer ago still, when all the nameless nations of flint chippers had a common language and habitation.

The inquiry into the number and nature of the fixed mythical ideas which underlie the Protean forms of legendary fiction would carry us too far; it will be enough to suggest that the tenacity of popular memory for such things is, perhaps, assisted by the inarticulate, ideal conscience of the race; so that frivolous, or it may be immoral, narratives are tolerated for the higher meaning which, perhaps, they never knowingly had, and yet can never have been quite without, because its idea, in the Platonic sense, was existing all the time, and only awaiting recognition to become a reality. Behind the coarse and material language of early myths there hides not only the sentiment which this rather parodies than expresses, but all the consequences and developments which may follow from its nature as well. This is the true and primitive "possibility," the meaning which is not the less real for being latent and, as it were, optional. In interpreting the first and vaguest hints at future myths and legends,

it is especially desirable to remember this elasticity of early speculative thought, or we shall be apt to do injustice to the wisdom of our ancestors. At first sight the discrepancies between the most authoritative translations of some Vedic hymns seem hopelessly discouraging, but when several accomplished contemporaries are in doubt as to how they shall render an imaginative phrase, may we not suppose that its authors were content without defining and restricting too accurately that sense, out of many, which they assigned to it? We know how difficult it is to get a definition from children, and there is an intellectual period in which the word means the thing, the whole thing, nothing but the thing, and therewith an end, or rather a beginning, to all the dreams and discoveries of realism, since the nature of things is that which first shows man the infinite, and so leads him to shelter behind limitations.

Amongst so much that is doubtful, it is a comfort to be able to speak positively as to the first abstract idea which found literary expression in what the Avesta calls "the Aryan home." It was the idea of *Cow*. And as the myths derived from this fertile and comprehensive conception are comparatively simple and familiar, we cannot do better than follow them through their later modifications, which are both interesting in themselves, and may serve as an example of the way in which we should like to see more difficult mythological problems considered. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. The Arab's standard of comparison is his camel, the Persian's his horse, and when the mind is much taken up with cows, cows naturally supply the favourite figures of speech. That cow-stealing was a familiar idea to the Vedic Indians is seen in such phrases as: "Release Vasishtha, O king, like a thief who has feasted on stolen oxen;" and though Cacus and Vala are not exactly incarnations, as Professor H. H. Wilson put it, of the local Donald Bean Lean, they certainly presuppose his existence. But the attention paid to this mythical episode of the capture of the heavenly cows by the powers of darkness and drought, has been rather unfairly withheld from other more characteristic, and especially more fertile variations on the original metaphor. The myth of Vala scarcely lived to receive a distinct objective form; and that of Cacus, an old wife's tale without pictorial plausibility or philosophical insight, died out with classical mythology, and left no successors, unless we please to connect it with a not uncommon introduction to Bluebeard stories and some others, in which hero or heroine set forth, like Saul in search of his father's asses, to recover some domestic animal that has been lost or stolen.

But to the ancient Aryans the cow was much more than a domestic animal. To the followers of Zoroaster, converts to agriculture and "the settled life," the earth itself is the great archetypal cow, cut up and offered as a sacrifice, while from its members all things living

proceeded; the natural world is *Gēus aréa*, the soul of the cow, cut up by the plough for the use of men. The early Deva worshippers, on the other hand, who retained their pastoral habits longer, never gave up the imagery of the dairy, even when they had ceased to draw all their support from its produce. The famous "churning of the ocean" is an instance of this—a legend which seems always to call up a smile on European lips, though really it is not easy to see what image of the mysteries of creation could be better than the familiar, unintelligible process by which the solid evolves itself from the fluid, and the sacrificial butter "comes." Yet older phrases address the "Beautiful Aswins, sowing barley with the plough and *milking* food for man." And when the progress of agriculture has made the state of the harvest an all-important consideration, the heavy rain-clouds become the cows, which Indra drives back "that the brilliant waters may flow freely for man." Beyond this point the metaphor falls a prey to confusion. The Maruts "lead about the powerful horse to make it rain; they milk the thundering unceasing spring," while the same hymn talks of the "tall bulls of heaven, the manly ones of Rudra . . . scattering raindrops, of awful shape, like giants." At this juncture the myth ought to come into being, a conception which is not allegorical, because it commands belief, nor an article of religion, because all know that it has to be understood in a transcendental sense. The Indian mind was too speculative for this objective phase of mythologising to reach anything like the development which it did in Greece, but this once they seem to have gone so far towards personifying the vessel from whence the fertilising showers proceed, that the cows of heaven seem almost to become real mythological entities, not vague metaphors for dawns or days or raindrops, but personages as distinct from all this as the Hermes of the Homeric hymn is from the whistling wind.

The idea of cow is not exhausted with its mythological rendering. A legendary, pseudo-historical belief identifies the fertile land of India with the wonder-working cow that kindled such dire passions in the celestial minds of King Visvamitra and the holy Vasishtha. Here we see the transitional character of the heroic or saga period; for these worthies belong half to solar mythology, half to playful fairy-tale, and between the two we have to find room for the historical possibility that a Kshatriya champion tried to secularise the established church, and did for a time appropriate the prerogatives of the Brahman class, which, however, almost deserved its subsequent triumph by its skill in putting a good face on defeat. The territorial sense of the cow of plenty is the one on which we are least disposed to dwell. A mere figure of speech does not deserve to be treated with the same respect as a myth in process of being made or remade, and the wonderful cow of the sage introduces us to the tertiary period of popular lore. She is, in fact, the prototype of all those magically productive animals

or talismans which, in later fairy tales serve to satisfy the vulgar human craving after omelettes made without eggs, and blooming conclusions derived from barren premisses, though it is quite possible that the original framers of the myth intended a serious allusion to the rich and inscrutable vital powers of nature. That the cow is to be understood as the sun seems scarcely likely from the tone of the story in the "Ramayana," which is, moreover, old enough to reach back to the time when cows were still connected with the idea of fertilizing moisture. Fire and water are the two original good principles, and the Indra, whose chief function it is to bring back the rain-clouds, is only conceived as the sun because it is natural to distinguish between the actor and the object of an action; otherwise Indra might with perfect propriety be looked upon as himself the god of the heavenly streams. Vasishta's cow has equally various properties, and perhaps the safest way is to consider her as a great image of *natura naturans*, who supplies, as occasion demands, a feast and presents for King Visvāmitra and all his hosts, or an endless succession of warriors to resist the profane attempt to capture her by earthly might.

The wonder-working possessions, which are connected with the sun in his narrower and literal sense, are of scarcely inferior antiquity, and may generally be recognised by their aggressive or destructive qualities, whilst the equivalent of the more peaceful benefactions of the cow are stones or other talismans, which coin money and whatever else is required out of nothing, instead of (like the golden goose, &c.) producing it by the idealisation of some natural process. Such perhaps is Sintamani, Indra's jewel, produced, like so many other valuables, at the churning of the ocean; such is certainly the jewel Syamantaka, which was worn by the sun himself, who, on taking it off, appears like a dwarfish copper-coloured man; in Vishnu Purana he gives the jewel to Satrajit, and it yields twelve loads of gold daily, besides bringing good fortune in other respects; but a chaste and virtuous life are indispensable to its possessor, who will otherwise meet with a violent death. Parallels in the fairy tales of all nations are simply innumerable, but later on it became usual to divide the magical qualities amongst three separate articles; and here, again, we must distinguish two co-ordinate forms of the myth. In one the hero acquires (generally by treachery) three things by the help of which he accomplishes the adventure on which he is engaged; two of these are almost always the shoes of swiftness and the cap of darkness, but the third varies. In Somadeva's fairy tales (eleventh century, but the materials, of course, much older) it is a staff which creates whatever you draw with it ("Indra with the rays of the morning gives sense to the senseless and to the formless form"); in the myth of Perseus, where the properties of the helmet of Hades and the shoes are also neglected, it is a wallet, which, perhaps, like that in a modern Hungarian tale, may have been valuable because it would hold what-

ever was put into it (including Gorgons) without being inconveniently full, though such things serve more commonly to supply inexhaustible bread and butter. In "Jack the Giant-killer," and perhaps in the corrected form of the legend, the third gift is the sword of sharpness, which frequently occurs by itself, and sometimes includes the virtues of all the rest, like a wonder-sword, that satisfied every wish, given by a Rakshasi to Indrasena, which was somehow connected with the life of its possessor, who swoons when it is broken. The shoes sometimes transport their owner to the desired locality without even the formality of flying; but a wishing-cloak, in a Wallachian story, brings him next morning where he wished to be the night before, so that he travels through all the hours of darkness. Hahn asks if this is a solar allusion, and the mythological character of all these treasures is sufficiently apparent.

The other story of three gifts, which is a great favourite in modern Europe, is of a less heroic cast. A poor man receives, as a reward for his charity, a table-cloth which covers itself with a splendid feast whenever it is unfolded, a gold-producing animal, and a cudgel which lays on of itself, and so recovers the two other things stolen by a fraudulent innkeeper, or guilefully acquired by a princess; in the latter case, however, instead of the cudgel, nose-elongating apples are the instrument of vengeance. There is not much to be said about the table-cloth, except that it is the last and sadly degenerate representative of Vasishtha's cow. But the golden ass or sheep has an affinity for swindling stories of another type, which, if Hermes be the original clever thief, is mythologically as it should be, though the cynical disintegration of early tradition must have proceeded very far before the golden showers which the wind offers for sale are contemptuously rejected as so much common rain, while the flocks and herds of heaven reflected in the lake are openly treated as an illusion. With the cudgel we can return to the ages of faith. A volume of Estonian fairy tales, translated into German from Kreuzwald's collection, is very interesting as showing the way in which a people, that has scarcely outgrown the mythological age, keeps revising its traditions and bringing them back into harmony with the prevailing system of natural philosophy. Here we have wishing-shoes, and a hat which enables the wearer to see everything, natural and supernatural, and even to read thought (the light of day?), but the stick undoubtedly transports us at once into the skies. When it is waved through the air everything melts before it; rocks, mountains, and bad spirits disappear, "for it is even stronger than Pickne's arrow, the thunder-bolt." Scarcely less plain is the *chapeau fulminant* of the Slavonic fairy tales collected by M. Chodzko, chiefly for the sake of the traces of Vedic mythology and religion to be found in them. Here we have a productive table-cloth, a girdle that turns to a sheet of water, a cudgel (which is obviously *de trop*), and a hat which shoots of its own accord in every direction; this the author connects with

the wonderful weapons of Rama ("Ramayana," xxx.) in the description of which matter and spirit seem inextricably mixed, or rather convertible; and the Lithuanian tale is certainly very magical, and retains a primitive ring even in the French translation.

All these stories of talismans with a more or less remote mythological origin must be distinguished from the "wishing" fairy tales, and from those in which the fates delight in enriching the stupid or idle hero in spite of the blundering way in which he misuses their gifts. M. Chodzko is most probably right in deriving these tales from the faintly-remembered Indian traditions of the virtue of inaction on the one hand, and the powers of the ascetic will on the other. The Rishis, who acquire by force of penance the power of reducing their enemies to ashes by a look—nay, even the dreadful Visvamitra, whose austerities could call new stars and new gods into being, are near relations of the good little girls in Sicilian or Albanian fairy tales who "pray" themselves out of the difficulties in which they are placed by cruel step-mothers. The choice of the idle, good-for-nothing hero as the favourite of fortune—in the North he is generally stupid, and in the South a spendthrift besides,—is no doubt also in part the expression of a sense that the goddess is blind; but this very fatalism is just what encourages inaction, and on the principle that everything comes right to him who can wait, the despised hero goes on waiting till circumstances are too strong for him, and throw him forcibly into the arms of fortune. Scarcely any of the secondary causes which are suggested in different legends to explain his exaltation, appear to be primitive, though the one in Basile's "Pentameron" (early seventeenth century) may perhaps be old. The poor younger brother is turned out of doors and takes shelter at a lonely inn. He finds twelve men seated round the table, and in answer to their remarks on the stormy weather, he expresses himself with great propriety on the advantages of change and variety in the seasons. One of the youths then reflects upon the month of March, a blustering, ungenial fellow, for whom, at least, there is nothing to be said. The hero, on the contrary praises him eloquently, he takes away the winter, brings in the spring, and is, apparently, one of the most valuable and indispensable of months. Upon this the young man, who is himself of course the month of March, presents his apologist with a wishing-casket, while the envious brother, who comes a little later, gets a flail in answer to his uncivil speeches. The appearance of the months as mythological personages, which is common in the Slavonic tales, is rather a sign of genuineness, but the notion that fair words are a cheap and profitable investment is of no date in particular. To praise an ugly tree or a muddy fountain is a piece of advice often given in fairy tales, while in Indian poetry the regular way of invoking the assistance of a god is to praise him for the benefits he has not, as yet, begun to confer.

The transitional form of simply "wishing" things into existence

does not last long in popular tradition, though "Wunsch" in Germany had a narrow escape of deification, and the other lines of thought which we have indicated are not, of course, always kept distinct. Thus in the common and always wonderful story of the fish, there seems to be very little of the quasi-religious element, and what might be mythology looks almost more like the remains of a comparatively late superstition. The story is an especial favourite in the East of Europe, where the power of wishing bestowed by the fish is connected with magical formulas such as "By the first word of God and the second of the fish," or "At the pike's command and at my request," but it is told also in modern Greece, and is given in the "Pentamerone" (3), together with the still more remarkable incident of an enchanted fish whose inside contained palaces and gardens and all sorts of wonderful treasures, according to the injured princess accidentally swallowed by him. The latter trait can scarcely be anything but Indian; whether in the other story we have the Fish-Sun, or some other kind of divinity, is a question on which we can scarcely venture to enter, for it would be more inexhaustible even than that of cows. In Germany the fish only appears in connection with the moral tale of the fisherman and his wife, whose wishes grew with indulgence till their impiety was punished by a return to their original poverty. In some versions, but unfortunately for the solar aspect of the fish, not in all, the request which calls down judgment is that the old man and his wife, who are already emperor and empress, may be able to make rain and sunshine like the "Herr Gott" himself.

Nearly all the more familiar legends of the nursery might be followed in this way, and at much greater length, through all their successive modifications, back to the physical or moral conception which first inspired them, and to which, all things considered, they keep so strangely faithful. A volume might be written on younger brothers, from Thraetona, Joseph and Perdiccas, to the hero who with us has, unfortunately, got the name of Boots. The false wife of modern fairy tales has to be traced, if we can, to the shadow-bride whom Saranyu left in the arms of Vivasvat. The Cupid and Psyche formula, with the half-akin Bluebeard tales, has more variations than any, and almost all have some fresh point of interest for the mythologist. Then there is the giant with no heart in his body, of whose legend our "Jack and the Beanstalk" is a part. There is "The Man born to be King" who still flourishes in the nursery; there is "Cinderella," or rather "Peau d'Ane," with her three mythological dresses, about which Grimm has not a word to say; there is "Pass in Boots," sometimes a fox, and in Africa a gazelle; there is the myth of the gifted servants, Grimm's "Sechse durch die Welt," which turned to allegory in Scandinavia; there are the common dragon-killing stories, with their comic parody—these, and dozens of others

are still familiarly told in nearly all the countries of Europe, and, to all appearance, of Asia as well, to say nothing of gleanings in Africa, America, and Polynesia; and it is obvious at a glance that they must have much to teach, both about the migrations of the different nations which tell them, and still more about the wanderings of the ideas presupposed in them. As has been already remarked, the external history and transmission of fairy tales forms a separate subject, and it is one to be avoided if possible, because most of the arguments in support of the alternative theories are of a general, that is to say, an unsatisfactory character, while some of the views propounded by learned Germans are absolutely extravagant, so much so that we can scarcely imagine them to have been meant to apply to fairy tales proper, *Kinder Märchen*, as distinguished from the realistic fiction current amongst adults.

With regard to compositions of this class (rudimentary romance, not decayed religion), the doctrine of direct, and, as it were, accidental, transmission within historic times is not so incredible in itself, though we have our doubts whether very extensive results are to be hoped for from it; for, in the first place, a great many mediæval romances, since dramatised, were only rationalised and distorted fairy tales; and, in the second place, the jests and anecdotes which have plainly always been of the earth, earthy, are nevertheless in many cases as widely diffused as if they were solar. The story, for instance, of patient Griselda is a perfect psychological puzzle till we discover its origin in the confusion of two, or perhaps three, legendary types; namely, the wife whose children are taken from her by some superior power in consequence of an act of disobedience like Psyche's, the wife whose children are changed for puppy-dogs by a jealous mother-in-law or sisters, and stories of the "Proud Princess" or "Hakon Grizzlebeard" order, in which the husband has some reason for trying his wife's fortitude. It is not so easy to say what Portia and Imogen were originally, but they still live in the Western Highlands (Campbell, 18), in company with ancient fairy elements, while the latter, and Helena (of *All's Well that Ends Well*) are at home in India. Not to multiply instances, we will only mention the story of the grateful corpse ("Tales of the Western Highlands," 32), which is as old as Tobit, was very popular in France under the name of "Jean de Calais," and in Germany as "Der Gute Gerhard," under which title it has been separately treated by Simrock, with abundant learning and rather superabundant mythologising.

The amount of direct evidence which we shall demand in support of the importation of any particular legend will depend on our sense of the antecedent improbability of such modes of transmission; and it is with some hesitation that we venture to cast a doubt upon the conclusions of Professor Max Müller's admirable study of La Fontaine's milkmaid and her Oriental cousins. Yet there certainly does seem to

be a gap just at the most critical point in the chain of derivation. The author shows us the bodily original of "La Laitière et le Pot au Lait" in a work of the thirteenth century, called the "Dialogus Creaturarum optime Moralizatus;" she reappears in Don Juan Manuel's "Conde Lucanor," a century later; and Rabelais mentions her familiarly and, as it were, proverbially. Now the story of the Brahman and the jar of honey, which he breaks while correcting in imagination the son who was to be born when he was rich enough to take a wife, did not come into Europe, it is agreed, before the Greek translation of fables from the "Panchatantra" by Symeon Seth, called "Ichnelates and Stephanites," which was not published till the seventeenth century, and cannot have been very widely known in the Middle Ages on account of its language. The work which did become popular, as the "Directorium Humanæ Vitæ," belongs to the same century as that assigned to the "Dialogus Creaturarum," so that there is no time for us to suppose the story to have modified itself by degrees. But modification is almost too mild an expression for the transformation it has undergone, which is the more striking when we contrast it with the accuracy, not to say servility, of the avowed translations. In these the sex and calling of the Brahman are left unchanged, though to Western ears it must have seemed incongruous for a hermit to be dreaming about a wife and children. If the author of our version had only wished to smooth away this difficulty, it would have been enough to make Perette's family a thing of the future; in which case La Fontaine would have avoided the redundant severity of making her both lose her milk and run the risk of being thrashed besides. In point of fact, the Indian equivalent of "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched" is "Don't educate your children before they are born," and, from this point of view, the story of the jar of honey claims kindred with that of the wise family to which one came to woo. None of the semi-Gothamite stories are more widely spread than this of the girl who falls to weeping at the thought of the accident that may happen to the child who may be born if she marries the man who is meanwhile waiting for something to drink. Such traits are always open to the suspicion of having had, perhaps, originally a grave satirical purpose. The poets of Persia and Scandinavia think nothing of adjourning a *rendetta* to the third generation; Hreidmar and Feridun console the widow of a murdered hero in the same terms: "If you have a daughter instead of a son, give her a husband, and her son shall avenge you." This exaggerated foresight, and the general habit of being too clever by half, are just the kind of things on which popular wit delights to exercise itself; and it is, to say the least of it, possible that its expression in the fable of the milkmaid may have had an independent existence in the West. A modern Greek story has preserved the first or commercial calculation part of the fable. A man named

Penteklimas finds a peascod, and resolves to sow the peas in it; but, instead of doing so, he carries it about with him, and calculates how much money he will have when the peas have multiplied several hundred and thousandfold, and finally bespeaks two hundred vessels to contain his future wealth. The end is that he marries a princess on credit, and finds a treasure by accident; but whether "Ichneutes and Stephanites" have anything to do with his adventures is a question we should prefer to leave open.

An instance of quite undoubted transmission, given by Professor Müller in the same article (*Contemporary Review*, July, 1870), shows that the inner significance and application of a legend are as much exposed to variation as the circumstances of the narrative. The well-known medieval allegory, which represents the perilous position of man, who, fleeing one danger, falls into another, and finds the protection to which he trusted about to fail and hurl him into worse destruction still, seems as if it must always have had the direct spiritual moral assigned to it in "Barlaam and Josaphat" and the Buddhist original of that work. But, on the contrary, the oldest, and to all appearance the favourite, application of the allegory is to the sin of celibacy. The men hanging downwards by a tree, at the roots of which mice are gnawing, are the ancestors of a person who has neglected to provide himself with a wife and children, so that his family is threatened with extinction. The tree, there can be little doubt, is older than both the social and the ascetic allegory, being, in fact, twin brother of the ash, Yggdrasil, with the branches that drop honey, and one root over the mouth of hell, at which Hwergelmir and Nidhögg are ever gnawing. Certainly we cannot suppose Buddhist influence in the Edda, but we should be glad to know what was meant by the parable, if the primæval man hung perilously from the great world-tree before Odin and Buddha were dreamt of, for it must have been something very different from a rebuke of old bachelors, or a sermon on religious detachment from earthly pleasures.

The picturesqueness of this bit of traditional description is probably what has kept it alive through so many attempts to "improve" it; for it is not the sort of thing which would be reinvented if once lost, while the uncertainty of its application would tend to weaken its hold on the popular memory. That it has been remembered we see, and we cannot, therefore, wonder at the longevity of riddles, jests, puzzles, and other *jeux d'esprit* which are made on purpose for verbal repetition. Even in England the recitation of fairy tales with careful and literal accuracy seems to have lasted down into the present century, for a Somersetshire woman, in telling a story to Keightley, the author of "Fairy Mythology," ended with the phrase, "And I came away"—a formula to which she attached no meaning, and only repeated because she had been told it so herself, but which

is the exact equivalent of the discontented or sceptical phrases with which Norwegian, Sicilian, or Hungarian peasants break the descent from fairyland to the hardships of life. Phrases like this, and nursery rhymes—the more meaningless the better—are invaluable in enabling us to estimate the probable length of time during which a tradition will remain pure, both before and after its meaning has been forgotten. Of course, even the nursery rhymes had a meaning in the first instance, and numerical jingles like the English doggerel beginning—

“Two Monkeys tied to a clog,
With a gaping widemouthed waddling frog,”

are treated very seriously indeed in Persian and Sanskrit literature. In the Mahabharata the contest between the royal bard and the child Ashtavakra consists in capping verses of this sort. They proceed alternately. There is but one Yama, Agni and Indra are two, and so on up to twelve Rudras and twelve Adityas. Then it is the bard's turn, and he begins, “Half a month has thirteen days, the wide earth has thirteen islands,” but could not get any further, so the other took it up—“Vishnu walked for thirteen days, and there are thirteen chief rhythms in the Vedas.” There is something of the same formal gymnastic look in a conflict of dark philosophic sayings held in the reign of Bahram Gour, and perhaps even in the arguments by which (according to Firdusi) the Crown Prince Khesra converted his father Khobad from the errors of the communistic heresiarch Mazdek (who, by the way, seems to have been a remarkable man, and quite thirteen centuries in advance of his supposed age—sixth century, A.D.). And Firdusi himself is the hero of a somewhat similar legend. The notion of scolding matches, in which it is important to have the last word, is very common, the devil being generally the defeated respondent. Dialogues of this kind, or the still better known “causation” tales, like the old woman whose pig would not go to market, are our safest guides, both in what concerns the migration of fables, and in ascertaining which incidents and ideas are most welcome and congenial to the unsophisticated mind.

With writers belonging to the sophisticated classes it is always doubtful whether a sentimental archaism or the reproduction of a legendary trait is deliberate or accidental. When Amyas Leigh breaks the crown of his pedagogue with a slate, are we to think of Herakles and his tutor Linus? It is impossible not to do so as we read. But did Mr. Kingsley? If not, we shall scarcely find a better instance of the indestructibility of fiction, unless we look in Dumas, who cannot be suspected of indulging in this kind of classical ingenuity. The ease with which Louis XIV. could be exalted into a solar hero has often been remarked upon, and it certainly looks as if fate rather than chance had been at work in applying to him and Mademoiselle La Vallière the very common incident of three girls who

are overheard wishing for three lovers. In a modern Greek fairy tale (Hahn, 9), the eldest of three sisters wishes to marry the king's cook, the second his treasurer, and the youngest says that if the king's son will marry her, she will bear him three children like the sun, moon, and morning star. The same story occurs in the English translation of Arnason's "Icelandic Tales," and it would be easier to count the collections in which it is wanting, than those which give it in one shape or another. In Dumas' "Vicomte de Bragelonne" two of the maids of honour are expressing their admiration for two of the king's courtiers, and ask Louise for her opinion, which is, that those must be blind who, in the king's presence, can see any one but himself. The conversation is overheard by the parties interested, and this is the beginning of the king's passion. Most probably Dumas, who acted on the principle of taking his goods wherever he found them, had some recollection of having heard an incident of the kind related, and thought it was appropriate to the character of a monarch too illustrious to be conceived as making love himself. In the same way any other mythological idea, when it has once been expressed in terms of human passion or incident, is liable to be supplanted by the literal sense of the tale. The sign and the thing signified change places so often that it is not easy to be very certain which was which in the days of the first literary creations. Even the well-worn solar romance of all the heroes who "love and ride away" may suggest a doubt which is the most certain, that the sun rises and sets every day the whole world over, or that in every country upon which he rises and sets men will be found to love, betray, and die a glorious or a miserable death. To go out in fire and smoke scarcely proves more as to a heavenly origin. The seventh article of advice given by Brynhild to Sigurd runs, in Simrock's translation—

"Mehr frommt Fechten als in Feuer aufgehen
Mit Hof und Halle."

In war, fire and sword are very real alternatives, as we have been only too lately reminded. When the enemies of a hero are afraid of meeting his irresistible steel, they surround and *smoke* him, and as he refuses to surrender, Burnt Njal and the Nibelungs have as grand a funeral pyre as Herakles. We see that, as early as the Edda, the use of such weapons was not considered chivalrous, and in the abortive attempt at a similar catastrophe in the Mahabharata, the plot is altogether treacherous.

It would be easy to multiply cases where internal evidence is suspicious, and apparent coincidence misleading; but it is time to bring these discursive remarks to an end, with the hope that any unsound interpretations they may contain will be forgiven for the sake of the undoubtedly just conclusion to which they are meant to lead: that in Comparative Mythology, as elsewhere, a grain of fact is worth a pound of theory.

H. LAWRENNY.

ZUAN THE GONDOLIER.*

ON a black and stormy night of October an old man lay dying in his own house, in a little court in the city of Venice. It was a peculiar court—not one of the little “campi” or “campielli” which are so common in the Sea City, and which answer to what in other Italian cities are called “piazze” or “piazzette”—the squares and courts of our own towns. It had been the cloister of a long-since suppressed monastery, the ownership of the buildings of which had passed into private hands. The church, an interesting Gothic brick building of the thirteenth century is, was then, and for many years had been, used as a warehouse, and the adjoining cloister had been let off or sold off into a number of humble private dwellings. In one of these—one of the best of them—old Jacopo Parravich had long lived, and was now dying.

A very picturesque spot is the old cloister—dear to artists—though so hidden away in the labyrinth of Venetian “calle,” or lanes, as to be unknown, and nearly unfindable by the passing tourist. And yet it is so near to the “Salute,” the superb domed church at the head of the Grand Canal, which all the world knows, that the huge towering dome of the more recent church, Longhena’s masterpiece, can be seen from the little cloister raising its head insolently far above the old degraded church of the monastery, which had belonged to a much better period of architecture. Doubtless the cloister, in a picturesque point of view, is far prettier now than it was when inhabited by its original possessors. The beautiful marble columns, with their exquisitely carved capitals, remain, though yellow with dirt and smoke, and festooned with cobwebs. One or two only of the charming Venetian Gothic windows of the rooms above the cloister walk remain; but the habits of the dwellers in them have filled the windows with masses of varied colour—flowers or curtains, or articles hung out to dry—which, harmonised and poetised by the light of a Venetian sky, add just the amount of living tints to the sombre old architecture that an artist requires for his purpose.

But on the October evening in question they were harmonised by no such light, and the appearance of the little cloister and the dwellings around it were sombre and dreary-looking enough. The place itself, from the form and nature of its construction, was much sheltered from the tempest; but the fierce beating of the water in the Grand Canal close at hand against the foundations of the palaces which

* Zuan is Venetian for Juan, or Giovanni.

enclose it, and against the huge marble steps of the Salute, could be heard amid the roaring of the wind, as it rushed from the lagoon up the channel of the Grand Canal with a force that made even the passing of a gondola from one side of it to the other almost, if not quite, impossible. For little as the fine-weather tourist, luxuriously reclining in his gondola on the placid lagoon, may imagine it, there are times when even the small canals can be navigated by gondolas only with extreme difficulty, and not a gondolier in Venice would think of venturing into the wider and more exposed Grand Canal. For the Adriatic is still the "iracunda Adria" of the ancient poet, and Venice, queen of it though she be, is now and then not a little afraid of her turbulent subject.

And it was on such a night that the long life of the old Jacopo Parravich had found its last sundown—an ending not inappropriate to his past life, as some of the older gossips of the cloister whispered to one another. Only two or three of the older inhabitants, whose lives were also near their close—for old father Parravich had for a long time past—ever since he had lived in the cloister, indeed—been a most respectable man—the most highly respectable man in the little community, indeed. And as to the doings of his younger days, he had doubtless repented of them, or had, in truth, forgotten them—which, of course, came to much about the same thing. But other folks do not forget all that they ought to forget so readily as we might wish them to do. And the *chronique scandaleuse* of the locality had preserved stories of the long-ago times when Jacopo Parravich had been one of the most desperate and boldest smugglers of the coast. He was, as his name indicates, a Dalmatian by origin, like so many others of the inhabitants of the Sea-born City, and like so many of his original countrymen, had been a first-rate sailor.

Well, a smuggler! What's that? Public opinion, especially under such a government as that which then ruled Venice, easily forgives sins against the fisc. But then a bold smuggler may have, in the prosecution of his business, to do deeds that . . . In short, there were old stories. But Signor Parravich, well to do, and with his nest well feathered, had long been, as has been said, a most respectable man and citizen.

He was such a respectable man, that, as sometimes happens, the weight of his respectability had fallen rather heavily on the members of his family. These consisted, at the time of which we are speaking, namely, the night on which the old man died, of one son and one daughter, the children of his old age; for the old man had passed his seventy-fifth year, but his son Jacopo was only twenty-six, and his daughter Zerlina only nineteen. Old Jacopo Parravich had married late in life—in the days of his respectability—and he had been a widower for the last fifteen years.

Now the way in which the burthen of their father's respectability

had fallen heavily on his son and daughter had been that in which similar misfortunes so often manifest themselves—the chapter of love and marriage. Old Parravich, to whom wealth and respectability and a son and heir had come all pretty well together, was very desirous that his son should, in the matter of taking a wife, take at the same time a step in the social ladder. There had not been wanting to the young man an opportunity of doing so, had he chosen to profit by it. Had he so chosen at a time now about five years ago, he might have married a rich wife and settled down at home, with nothing else to do in life than to go to the cafe every day, to the theatre every Sunday, and *flaner* on the Great Square of St. Mark all day long. But the bright laughing eyes and lithe undulating figure of Ninetta Ponti, the fisherman's daughter at St. Peter's, out beyond the Arsenal, had come between him and this promotion, and rendered it impossible for him. The result had been a very terrible quarrel between him and the masterful old man, his father; and young Jacopo, shaking the dust off his feet, and swearing that he would rather earn wherewithal to keep a wife of his own choosing, than take one chosen for him, even with all the above enumerated advantages, had gone back to his profession—the sea—and was at the present time absent on a voyage as second mate on board a Levantine trader. He had gone, and had taken with him his father's formally-pronounced curse, more especially fulminated and declared to be eternal and irrevocable if he should ever marry the daughter of Zacaria Ponti, the fisherman at St. Pietro.

And a father's curse, so pronounced and motivated, though it had not availed to keep the young man at home and bend him to obedience, was yet a very heavy and terrible thing to the young Venetian. A Florentine would have laughed to scorn any such bugaboo attempt to interfere with his free will. But it is not in Venice as it is in Florence. Feelings of religion are not dead there among the people as they are at Florence. Old respects, old beliefs, old superstitions are still powerful, not only among the women, but among the men of the ancient Sea City, to a greater degree perhaps than they are in any other part of the peninsula. So young Jacopo Parravich, though unyielding, had gone away very heavily burthened by his father's curse, and made still further miserable by the conviction that, even if he should decide to disregard such an obstacle, his timid and gentle little Ninetta would never be brought to consent to a marriage so barred.

As for poor Zerlina, she of course could not meet her father's commands with similar rebellion, though they had been laid on her in a manner equally grievous to her. For two reasons she could not. In the first place it was, of course, impracticable for her to walk out of her father's house and carve her own way in the world. And in the second place, maidenly modesty, and perhaps it may be said, a touch of maidenly coquetry, made such a line of action impossible to

her; for it was the same fertile topic of difference between seniors and juniors which had occasioned stern words of prohibition, none the less galling because Zerlina declared that they were needless, from her father to her.

In truth, it could not but be admitted that the suit of Zuan Con-tarin for the hand of Jacopo Parravich's daughter was a very bold one; for Zuan, despite his patrician name, was but a gondolier. He was, however, about the best representative of his class in all Venice—the most able, the most steady, and the most prosperous. His tall and slender, yet vigorous and wiry Venetian figure was a picture, as he stood in his white jacket and trousers and scarlet sash on the high poop of his gondola, skilfully piloting it among a crowd of craft of all sorts. His gondola, handsome and thoroughly well appointed in all respects, was his own. It had been a hard struggle to save up the nine hundred or a thousand francs needed for the acquisition of the gondola. But that point once gained, matters soon began to go better with Zuan, and he had already commenced the crescendo process of saving money. In the preceding summer he had been the winner in a Murano regatta, having easily distanced all his competitors in the course from the Lido to the mouth of the Murano canal. And that stroke of good fortune had added some hundred francs to his store at one blow.

For all that it was certainly somewhat audacious of Zuan to lift his eyes to the Signorina Zerlina Parravich; and the retired smuggler was scandalised and indignant at the audacity. Zerlina, in her heart of hearts, was neither scandalised nor indignant. Indeed she did not even pretend to be so. But . . . Zerlina was a spoiled child, and a beauty; and in the somewhat capricious exercise of her sovereign rights as such she inflicted many a heartache upon poor Zuan. "Si la jeunesse savait!" If Zuan had had the experience of forty instead of only twenty years, he might have known that Zerlina loved him. If he had been less modest and less strongly impressed by a sense of his own unworthiness of such a prize, he might have guessed the truth. But, as it was, the capricious and wayward beauty had chosen to try her lover's constancy by exercising him with alternate hopes and fears, till Zuan had on a hundred occasions half made up his mind to seek a service on board a long-sea merchantman, and bid adieu to love and Venice for ever!

This was the state of things when Parravich, who had never known a day's illness in his life, was stricken down, and felt sure that his time was come.

It was about an hour after sundown, and the dying old man and his confessor were alone together in his chamber looking into the little cloister. Zerlina was sitting, tearful and frightened, on the top stair of the flight which led down into the cloister walk, a few feet from the door of her father's room, and the woman who had been sent in by the doctor to nurse him had seized the opportunity of

slipping down into the cloister to talk over the state of things with a knot of the women below, and was enjoying the pre-eminence in gossiping to which position and opportunities entitled her.

Of course the first thing to be done, when the old Venetian felt that his hour was come, was to send for his confessor. It was not that his conscience was very heavily burthened by the recollection of certain lawless and violent deeds of his younger days. These matters were so long ago; they lay so far behind him. And they had all been in the way of business. But there was a matter which lay very heavy on his heart, the curse which he had pronounced on his only son, and the sad and unforgiving manner in which they had parted—now, or it would seem for ever! Nor did the teaching and words of his ghostly adviser differ much from the promptings of his own heart in this respect. The old sins were, the confessor was confidently assured, entirely repented of. Of course they were, when for long years past no temptation to the repetition of them had existed. And absolution on all these heads was duly and fully accorded. But then came this knot of the difficulty. The old man had not forgiven his son. It was true that he was miserable because he had *not* forgiven him—would only be too happy to forgive him, on due submission made. But there was still that at the inmost heart of the strong-willed and masterful old man that made free forgiveness, coupled with the knowledge that his son was to be left free to follow his own devices on the subject which had sat so near the old man's heart, that made the needful frame of mind impossible to him. And the exact state of the case was as plain to the trained moral pulse-feeling of the skilled confessor as if it had all been written on the penitent's forehead. The priest, as it happened, was an earnest and scrupulous man; and he could not feel himself justified in telling his penitent to depart in peace, unless he could succeed in first changing his heart in this respect. The old man writhed in his bed, and the sweat broke out in big drops on his furrowed brow. He wrestled hard. But the black drop was at his heart, and the evil will was too strong for him.

It seemed likely that his passing would be like that of Lorenzo de' Medici when Savonarola required of him, as the condition of absolution, that he should, so far as his will went, restore liberty to Florence. All else the dying tyrant could accord. But that was beyond him. And he turned his face to the wall, and died unannealed.

To the old smuggler the case was a hard one. The probing of the good priest was too searching for him! He too turned his face to the wall; but the faithful soul-physician did not give up his struggle with Satan.

Just at that conjuncture hurried steps of several persons were heard from the cloisters below. And in the next minute the old nurse came into the room, saying that one of the neighbours urgently desired to speak to the dying man. The tidings he brought were to the effect

that the ship in which young Jacopo Parravich sailed had been signalled from Malamocco. He knew the fact from the broker under the Procaratie Vecchie, to whom the vessel was consigned. The real discoverer and sender of the news was old Pietro Ponti, the fisherman, Ninetta's father, who had heard of the ship's arrival an hour or two ago from a boatman who had just come in from the Lido with difficulty through the storm. But he knew too well that it would not be wise for him: to be the bearer of the news. So he sent it to the dying father by one of his neighbours.

Yes, Jacopo's ship and Jacopo were at Malamocco, the port at the entrance of the lagoon. But there was not the smallest chance that the pilot would dream of attempting to bring the vessel into the lagoon and to Venice in the face of the tempest that was then raging. No doubt by the evening of the following day she would be anchored in front of the Riva degli Schiavoni. But old Jacopo felt all too surely that that would be too late for him!

"What is it to me," said the old man bitterly, "whether he is at Malamocco or at the world's end? One is as far off as t'other such a night as this; . . . and I shall never see the morning! If I could but see him, I" The unhappy man turned wearily in his bed, and moaned aloud.

Zerlina had accompanied the bringer of the news to the door of her father's room, and comprehended the whole of the circumstances and bearing of the situation in a moment. A sudden thought dashed through her brain. But it was a thought that first caused the tide of her blood to rush violently to her neck, her cheeks, her forehead, till she felt it tingling in her ears, and at the roots of her hair, and then as suddenly to retreat to the heart, leaving her fair oval face as white as marble beneath the glossy braids of her dark hair.

Was there no possible way by which her brother might be brought to that bedside before to-morrow's dawn, when so much, so terribly much for the eternal weal of the one man and for this world's happiness for the other might depend upon that meeting? No way!

Zerlina thought there might be one possibility—one, and one only! But the thought, as has been seen, was not one that commended itself to easy and welcome acceptance.

Zuan Contarin could take his gondola to Malamocco, and bring back her brother in four or five hours! If there was not another gondolier in Venice who would attempt the task, Zerlina felt the most perfect assurance that Zuan could do it, . . . and *would* do it . . . if she chose to ask it of him.

Ay, but *could* she bring herself to do that asking? She had been cruel to him at their last meeting. It had been the evening of a festa—a rare holiday for Zuan. And, dressed in all his best (and how handsome Zerlina thought he looked!), he had timidly proffered his petition to be allowed to escort her to the Lido, where there were to be gala doings and fireworks. But Zerlina had tossed her head, and

told him that it was quite out of the question; she was engaged to go with Signore Marco Tron. He was the son of a rich jeweller, who wore broadcloth and a chimney-pot hat, which was certainly more fitted than a poor man's jacket to consort with Zerlina's holiday muslin dress, and killing little hat, and boots with heels as high as any lady's in the land. Poor Zuan had slunk away, and watched her privily as young Tron led her to a gondola. And Zerlina had caught sight of him, and with a toss of her head had instantly begun talking and laughing with her companion with every appearance of the utmost enjoyment. And what a bore she had found young Tron! And now, as the punishing idea suggested itself to her mind for an instant of the amount of help that could be got from *him* in her present strait, ah, how ineffably contemptible and null he seemed to her in comparison to her lover of low degree!

But, after all this (and much previous treatment of the same sort), *could* she go to Zuan, and ask him to do this thing . . . for her sake? *For her sake!* For though her confidence was boundless in Zuan's prowess and skill, she knew well enough that the task was not one which any human being in Venice would undertake save for some such motive as that which she well knew "for her sake" would be to Zuan. Could she bring herself to do this?

Reserving the reply to this question for yet farther consideration, during the walk she meditated, and whispering to herself, "For life and death! for life and death! for more than life and death! for poor old father's soul!" she hurriedly put on her cloak, tied a handkerchief over her head, and quietly slipped out of the house, saying no word to any one, and unnoticed by any.

She knew well where Zuan was to be found. He lived with his widowed mother, who was the portress and care-taker of a huge old empty palace in one of the little "campi" behind the Riva degli Schiavoni, as the long quay is called which faces the island of St. Giorgio Maggiore and the lagoon. The owner of the once splendid, but now dilapidated, house in question lived in Paris, and old mother Contarin had for many years had the care of it. And her son had the advantage of gratuitous lodging in the rooms on the ground-floor occupied by his mother. She might have lodged half a dozen more sons there, if she had had them, without any injury done to the owner, or objection on his part. And on such a night as that Zuan was very sure to be at home. It would have needed a long walk for Zerlina to reach the part of the town to which she was bound at a period a few years earlier, for she would have had to go all round by the Rialto, seeing that not a man at the "traghetto" would have attempted to pull her across the Grand Canal. But the much-abused iron bridge, raised by an English engineer and speculator, in the immediate neighbourhood of the far-famed Gallery of the Belle Arti stood her in good stead, though she almost thought she should have been blown off it as she crossed. Holding hard on to the rail, she

made the passage, however, in safety, and found herself at the door of old Anna Contarin's porter's lodge almost sooner than she wished. For her reluctance to the task before her was extreme, and she had made no progress in determining in what words she would put the matter before her lover.

"Madre di Dio!" exclaimed Zuan, coming to the door, "la Signorina Zerlina! on such a night as this!"

"What has happened, *ragazza mia*?" said the old woman, who knew too much of Zerlina's treatment of her son to wish to be specially civil to her. "You look as if you had seen the ghosts of all the unbelieving Jews who lie buried on the Lido! You are as white as any ghost yourself. In God's name what is the matter?"

"Father is very ill," said Zerlina, catching at the chance of addressing herself in the first instance to the mother instead of to the son; "he is so ill that he is dying. The doctor says that he cannot live through the night."

"Cospetto! And he looking but the other day as if he would live for a hundred years!" exclaimed the old woman.

"If I had only known that there was trouble in your home, Signorina Zerlina! To think of your coming out such a night as this! But of course you are wanting help. Shall mother go with you to help nurse Signor Jacopo? Only say what we can do to be useful to you. Ah, Zerlina! don't you know that I would give my eyes to have the pleasure of serving you?"

"Father sent me, Signor Zuan," began Zerlina, who was now as violently red as she had been white before, "father sent me to say" Then, suddenly struck by the unworthiness of such a pretence, and of the feeling that prompted her to wish to obtain the services of Zuan on any ostensible terms save those which were in very truth to be the price of them, she checked herself; and becoming yet more scarlet in the face, and casting her eyes on the ground, added, "No! not that! poor father! he is too ill to do that, . . . but . . . he is sadly, terribly in want of what no one but a gondolier, such as is hardly to be found in all Venice, can do for him, and . . . and I thought"

"A gondolier! Eecomi! of course you know that anything one of my trade could do"

"To serve a dying man for his soul's welfare?" said Zerlina, venturing a glance up into his eyes.

"His soul's welfare!" said Zuan with a curious air of mixed reverence and disappointment. "Be it what it may, Signorina Zerlina, I am ready. Only say what is needed."

"Poor Jacopo is come back! His ship is signalled. She lies in Malamocco harbour. You know how father and he parted. Father can't bring himself to forgive him; and the priest will not give him absolution. And . . . oh, if Jacopo could only come to him before it is too late! Father said, as he lay moaning fit to break

your heart, 'if only he could see him!' But father will be dead before morning."

And Zerlina dropped her head upon her bosom, and looked fixedly on the ground.

"If he can't live till morning, and a bit longer," said the old woman, "he'll never see Jacopo again, that's certain. As well be at Smyrna as at Malamocco such a night as this. You don't suppose the ship is going to come in to-night, do you?"

"But Jacopo may be fetched! To be sure! That's what a gondolier can do! Of course! In five hours from now, Signorina Zerlina, Jacopo shall be here," said Zuan with joyous alacrity, preparing instantly to set about the task before him. "The gondola is at the riva!" he added.

"Are you mad, stark mad?" cried the old woman, "and are you not ashamed, girl, to come here tempting an only son to risk his life? You who"

"Hush, mother! Risk my life? Not a bit of it! But if it were to risk my life" Here he shot a glance at Zerlina's face, the magnetism of which was too strong for her to avoid a momentary raising of her eyes to meet his. . . . "And for the sake of a passing soul!" added Zuan with a tone of pious awe.

"A passing soul! For the sake of a white face and a pair of brown eyes, which were always too proud to look on you, you poor fool!" cried his mother. "You mean thing!" she went on, turning to the trembling girl; "how can you have the face to ask such a thing, and yet not the honest heart to say to a lad that worships you,—the more fool he!—'for my sake, *amor mio*!'"

"Hush, mother!" cried Zuan, now as red as Zerlina.

"It is for my sake, Zuan!" said Zerlina with tremulous lips, and not daring to look up. She had never called him simply Zuan before.

Zuan snatched her hand and pressed his lips upon it. "In five hours Jacopo shall be in Venice!"

"You shall not go!" screamed his mother.

"Not all hell should stop me! Mother, dearest mother, there is no danger beyond a wet skin. I shall be here long before morning. I promise it to you."

And with that he opened the door, and prepared to step out into the storm, which appeared to be raging worse than ever. Zerlina, without saying another word, stepped towards the door, as to accompany him.

"It is all in your way to the cloister, Signorina Zerlina. I can at least see you so far home," said Zuan, shutting the door behind him, as they both stepped out into the night; "and then"

"But I must go with you in the gondola, Zuan," said Zerlina, as she gathered her cloak about her.

"You! to Malamocco! this night! No! that will

never do ! Not for a million crowns ! No, Signorina Zerlina ; you must go home. I shall bring Jacopo to you."

"But is there then danger . . . danger to life, Zuan ?" asked Zerlina, taking his arm for the first time with a hand that he felt to tremble on it, though the force of the tempest might have been a sufficient excuse for doing so before.

"Danger ? well . . . it is not a pleasant night certainly—not a night for such as you, Signorina, to be on the lagoon. Besides, it will be better to have no passenger in the boat. I shall take a spare oar for Jacopo coming back ; . . . and perhaps I may find at the riva a friend who will go with me. Two oars are better than one. But for you ! No, Signorina, I can't take it upon myself to do that !"

"Please, let me go with you !" said Zerlina, with just the slightest pressure of her hand on his arm, and in a submissive tone of entreaty that seemed to Zuan's ears to alter very strangely the relative situation of both of them towards the other. For a moment he was beset by a strong temptation to accede to her request. The extraordinary monstrosity of a set of circumstances that should bring it to pass that Zerlina should sue to him, and he refuse her prayer, joined to a sudden imagination of the joy of having her under his protection, his alone in all the world, out on the wild lagoon, saving her life perchance with his strong arm around her, almost made him waver. But in the next instant good sense, the consciousness of what was right, and of what was best for her, returned in their full force, and enabled him to say—

"No, Signorina Zerlina, that cannot be ; I should be doing very wrong. I don't look to any mischief. But . . . the gondola may capsize. I should not be much the worse if it did," he hastened to add, as he felt a tremor of her arm and a nervous clutching of her hand ; "but if I failed to save you ! . . ."

"Zuan ! If you don't come back I should not care to live."

"Jacopo shall be brought back safe and sound, Signorina Zerlina," returned Zuan, cruel this time in his turn to the girl, who, in the stress of the moment, had cast her girlish pride of coquetry so far behind her.

"Zuan !" said Zerlina, still more palpably pressing his arm, and adding no further word. It was not said in a tone of remonstrance, but of such gentle, humble, loving appeal that to her lover's ear it was as good as a thousand.

"Zerlina !" he said. It was the first time he had ever so addressed her ; and the word was unmistakably replied to by another pressure of the arm.

"I am to go with you, Zuan, . . . now and . . ." The word that should have followed died on her lips.

"Not on the lagoon to-night, Zerlina ! . . . my love, my life, soul of my life, my treasure, my best and dearest !" he cried,

hurriedly rushing on the words with his tongue suddenly loosened. "See, my own treasure! here is the riva. My gondola is under that bridge. Do not let us lose time. You make haste home to your father, and tell him Jacopo will soon be here. And leave the rest to me."

"You are the master, Zuan!" she said submissively, and turned away to go. But she had not gone three steps before she turned, and again coming to his side, said—

"Zuan, I am afraid! I begin to wish that I had not asked you to do this thing. If . . . if you should . . . not come back . . . I would give almost anything that father should see Jacopo before he dies; but not even for that would I lose you!"

She looked up into his face through the darkness as she stood by his side. It was almost an invitation. Had it not seemed so Zuan would not have taken the advantage which the situation made for him. As it was, he threw his arms round her and pressed one long kiss, with all his soul in it, on her lips, and then turned quickly away towards his boat, saying:—

"Now, my own, my own love, I am strong enough for anything! Have no doubt, Zerlina. In five hours you will see me again."

Zerlina found her way back to the little dwelling in the cloister more slowly than she had come thence, musing, despite the tumult of the storm around her, and not upon the subject, near as it was to her heart, which had occupied her thoughts as she came.

Zuan jumped into his boat, and pushed out at once into the lagoon, taking no heed of the exclamations and questions of the few bystanders, who, with the constant interest of seafaring people in a storm, were standing on the riva. He made no attempt at getting any companion in his enterprise, as he had spoken of doing. He had never really intended anything of the kind. He knew too well that no inducement he had to offer would suffice to tempt any gondolier in Venice to share his task. He had only spoken of such a thing to tranquillise his mother and Zerlina. But he did take a second oar, for he reckoned on the assistance of Jacopo in coming back. Fortunately it would be on the return that the assistance was most needed, for on going out he had the tide with him. Nevertheless, the low water was a source of difficulty, for it was only by the greatest exertion and by watchful vigilance that he could avoid being blown by the wind upon one of the shoals which make the navigation of the lagoon so intricate. And this danger was added to by the pitchy darkness of the night. Nothing but such a life-long acquaintance with every inch of the lagoon, as made the knowledge of the localities seem like instinct, could have availed to keep the gondola in its proper course. And with all his thorough knowledge and all the vigour of his manhood in its prime, Zuan soon found that he had undertaken to the very full as much as he could perform. He did however, reach the *Divina Provvidenza*—that was the name of

Jacopo's ship—in safety at the end of two hours of such labour as he had never, even in a racing struggle, undergone before. The active and skilled gondolier, having the tide with him; will, in ordinary weather, reach Malamocco in an hour. It was at the end of two long hours that Zuan, wiping the perspiration from his brow jumped upon the deck of the *Divina Provvidenza*, to the extreme astonishment of her crew.

Meantime Zerlina had reached the shelter of the little cloister on her return. She found the nurse sitting at the bottom of the stairs, and the same knot of neighbours profiting by the godsend of a subject for endless gossip, which the event in process of completion up-stairs afforded them. When would an Italian tire of sitting still, *al fresco*, and gossiping? Zerlina learned that her father had fallen asleep, utterly exhausted, and the priest had gone away, promising to return in a few hours. No questions were asked respecting Zerlina's absence. The gossips were too much engaged in their own amusement. She was wet through, and after pausing for a minute by her sleeping father's bed-side, she went to change her clothes.

And all this time she found it impossible to bring her mind to bear otherwise than dreamingly, and, as it were, through a haze, upon the matters that had occupied it so entirely and so actively before she had started on her expedition. It seemed as if everything in the world had changed, as far as she was concerned, and the most pressing interest of the passing moment seemed to be listening to the roaring of the storm, and striving to estimate the probabilities of its being on the increase or on the decline in the lagoons.

She stood at the window of her little room, which looked on to the Grand Canal, gazing out into the darkness, listening intently, and apparently dreaming, but, in fact, waiting—waiting with intense anxiety—till she heard, after awhile—she could not at all tell how long—voices in her father's room. He had waked from his troublous sleep—stupor rather than sleep—and the priest had returned.

"If Jacopo wanted my forgiveness, he would have come for it! Storm! what's the storm? The lagoons? a storm in a puddle!" moaned the old man, forgetting, in his unreason, that it was impossible that his son should know that he was dying.

Then there was a sudden running and trampling of feet in the cloister below; the priest stepped hastily to the door, and in the next minute returned to the bed-side, saying, in distinct, calm tones—

"Jacopo is here. God, in his mercy, has sent him to you to receive your forgiveness and your blessing."

And in another instant his son, with nothing but his trousers and shirt on, drenched with salt water, and the perspiration streaming from his face, was on his knees beside the dying man's bed.

"Father, you will forgive me! You will give me your blessing!"

The dying man moved his shaking hand with difficulty, and succeeded in laying it on the wet, dark curls that covered his son's head.

"Jacopo!" he said. Yes, it is Jacopo! If you will promise me, my son"

But here the priest broke in, strongly and resolutely, speaking with all the majesty of his office:—

"Jacopo Parravich, God, in his boundless mercy and goodness, has allowed your son to come to you, that your soul may be saved from the perdition of passing to his judgment with the hideous guilt of an unnatural curse blackening your whole heart. And you make conditions! Man, dying man, who, in a few minutes, will stand before your Judge, you make conditions with God! Miserable sinner, accept the mercy offered to you. Let the blessing of peace, of charity, and of love enter your heart. Your son has risked his life to come to you. Take him to your heart, while the time is yet spared to you!"

Jacopo insinuated his arm beneath his father's head, and round his neck. In doing so his dripping shirt-sleeve touched the old man's lips.

"Salt water!" said the old smuggler. "Why, boy, you have been under water!"

"Pretty nearly, father. Zuan Cantarin and I had a hard job to cross the lagoon. It was he that brought me to you. Without him I should not have known how it was with you."

"Zuan Cantarin! Zuan with his gondola! Is Zuan here?" said the old man, striving to raise his head from the pillow.

Zerlina was standing at the bed-head on the further side, and looking across it, had, from the beginning of this scene, marked her lover, who, taller by half a head than any of the others, was looking into the room from behind the little knot who were gathered at the door.

"Zuan Cantarin is here, father," she said, bending down her head to whisper in his ear.

"Zuan Cantarin!" said the dying man. And Zuan, coming forward, stood by the side of Jacopo at the bed-side. "Zuan," continued he, gasping, "you are a brave lad! You have done me a good turn at sore need. I could have done as much once; but the lagoon is ugly such a night as this. I know your terms for the job, my lad. Zerlina, give him the reward he has earned."

"Here is Jacopo, papa Parravich, your son!" said Zuan, with rare thoughtfulness for others rather than himself. But his eyes were free to ask and receive Zerlina's obedience to her father's commands.

"God bless you, Jacopo, my son! It was good of you to come to me. And oh, father (to the priest), what a difference there is here!" striking his bosom as he spoke. "Zuan, Jacopo, Zerlina, God bless you, my children!"

T. A. TROLLOPE.

VOLTAIRE ON HAMLET.

"Two little English books inform us," says Jérôme Carre, alias M. de Voltaire, "that this nation, famous for so many excellent works and so many famous enterprises, is possessed of two excellent tragic poets: one is Shakespeare, who is said greatly to surpass Corneille; the other the tender Otway, much superior to the tender Racine."

STRANGE as it may appear, this was actually news to France in the eighteenth century, for Voltaire was almost the only Frenchman of his day who had studied Shakespeare. In 1762, when he sent his translation of *Julius Cæsar* to the academy (a play he much admired in spite of what he called its barbarous irregularities) D'Alembert wrote to him "The Academy trusts to you for the faithfulness of the translation, not having besides the original before them;" so that at a time when amidst the conflicts of the period England was acknowledged as the point to which the eyes of sages and philosophers were to be directed, a model for institutions, laws, and morals, her language was considered a barbarous one, and German hardly less so; France having arrogated to herself the sole supremacy in matters of taste over all other nations, whose only chance of literary glory was to imitate her—herself the imitatrix of the ancients!

"Taste will never pass into Germany" the King of Prussia wrote to Voltaire in 1775, "unless by the study of the classics, Greek and Roman, as well as French!" and a few years later he recommended the Duc de Montmorency not to learn German, "for," said he, "it is not worth your pains, seeing we have no good authors." The reason of so blind and ignorant a prejudice was this: those who had passed their lives in the company of the Greek tragedians would not admit of the slightest infringement of the monotonous and frigid rules which appeared to them to have been laid down by Eschylus and by Euripides, although there is probably not a single play of theirs in which the three unities, beyond which it was decreed that there could be no salvation, were really observed. With nearly one hundred private theatres in Paris alone, their *Britannicus*, *Phædre*, *Athalie*, sufficed to bound their ideas of dramatic excellence; and although the bulk of the people might not have been so fastidious, and may even in the provinces have condescended to patronise melodrama, Louis XIVth, in his gallery at Versailles, and those who came after him, were quite satisfied with their own classic drama, and would have been astonished could they have anticipated

that the verdict of time would be, that the true heirs of the Greeks were neither Racine nor Voltaire—but Shakespeare—but Schiller—but even more modern and more romantic writers! Some faint suspicion of this, some latent doubt of the lasting nature of rules so narrow and so severe, pierces however occasionally through Voltaire's more stringent criticisms. In his preface to the *Orphelin de la Chine* he says, "were the French not so very French, my Chinese would have been more Chinese, and Gengis still more a Tartar; but I had to impoverish my ideas and to hamper myself in the costume, in order to avoid shocking a frivolous nation, which laughs sillily and thinks it should laugh heartily at all that is not in keeping with its own manners, or rather with its own fashions."

Fondly as he clung to the full dressed and formal beauty of the tragedies of his time, in which a nice observance of social punctilio was to be followed in the height of passion, and like Cæsar after his death-blow, every victim was to writhe in his agony with due decorum, he could not help admitting that there were some inconsistencies which prevented the acting from being truly tragic. The arrangements of the stage, the paltry inadequacy of the scenery, and the ridiculous magnificence of the dresses, could not fail to strike a lover of art, as drawbacks to the true realisation of the scenes to be represented.

"Our playhouses," he admits, "when compared with the Greek and Roman theatres, are what our markets, our Place de Grève, our small village wells, are to the aqueducts and fountains of Agrippa, the Forum Trajani, the Coliseum, and the Capitol. Mountebanks hire a tennis court that they may have *Cinna* acted on a temporary stage. What can be done on a score of planks crowded with spectators?"

In 1740 the Emperor Augustus would appear on the stage covered with a square wig reaching to his waist stuck over with laurel leaves, and topped with a big hat over which again nodded a double range of red feathers.

A king, whether a Nicomedes or an Attila, was to be seen invariably in white gloves with gold fringes, the seams of his clothes laced over, and glass diamonds on his sword. Jocasta and Agrippina wore wide hoops and powdered hair, and attitudes and gestures were made to correspond to these masquerade habiliments.

Mademoiselle Clairon was the first actress to throw off the yoke of settled custom. She appeared all at once at the Versailles Theatre in the character of Roxana, without a hoop, her arms half uncovered, and in true Oriental costume. Her success was undoubted, although people did not know what to make of it; but the revolution just then did not go much beyond outward forms. The public showed a disposition to rebel against the most innocent innovations, and Voltaire himself, although a more natural and less monotonous declamation

moved him even to tears in the representation of his own "Electre," remained immovable in his attachment to the old rules.

Once in the wrong, he was one of those men who would plunge into error as deeply as possible, and would never quit a false or dangerous idea till he had exhausted it. "Never," says one of his biographers, "had a man more constantly the air of not only being in the right, but of being incapable of being in the wrong;" and yet without even going into his grossest errors, how many of his reasonings do we find inaccurate and incomplete! how many facts seen only from one point of view!

He spent his time in arguing for exceptions against the rule,—for abuses against use,—for evil against good! We find wit and good sense often meeting in him, but if an option has to be made, he does not hesitate. We ever find him witty rather than accurate, piquant rather than wise.

It was in this mood that he undertook his criticism, or rather his burlesque of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

He would perhaps have preferred finding his countrymen a little less ignorant on the subject, for to attack a man who is defended by nobody is, to say the best of it, hardly exciting, and we therefore find him waging for some years with the great English dramatist a somewhat underhand and indecisive warfare. He pronounces him ignoble, ridiculous, barbarous, but adds "Although Italians, French, and literary men of all countries take him for the merry Andrew of a fair, you find in him pieces that elevate the imagination and pierce the heart. It is truth, it is nature herself speaking her own language without any admixture of art. It is the sublime, yet the author has not sought for it; in fact there is one thing more extraordinary than all, and that is that Shakespeare is a genius!"

When, however, Letourneur published his translation of Shakespeare accompanied with exaggerated praises, and much softened down besides, where a literal rendering would have grated on French ears, Voltaire, alarmed at the spirit of innovation which he foresaw, was about to take formidable proportions, took up the cudgels in more sober earnest, and, although he was then in his eighty-third year, the academy received a long letter from him, a formal act against the English drama, in which he wrote,—“I am ever amazed that a nation which has produced men of genius, taste, and even of delicacy, should still affect to be vain of this abominable Shakespeare!”

It was resolved that this letter should be read at a public and solemn meeting. It passed off very triumphantly for the author, D'Alembert writing to him that the English who were present went away much chop fallen! but violent as was the onslaught, it was wild and impartial compared with his summary of the tragedy of *Hamlet*, which he offers to all readers from Petersburg to Naples as a

fair specimen of the excellent tragic poet who is supposed to surpass Corneille,—“the mountebank who has some happy strokes and who makes contortions.”

The little essay, which the author evidently intends to be taken as a model of enlightened and unprejudiced criticism, begins with the remark that it is impossible to hinder a whole nation from liking a poet of his own better than one of another country, and that although there is not a man of learning in Russia, in Italy, in Germany, in Spain, in Switzerland, or in Holland who is not acquainted with *Cinna* and *Phædra*, very few of them have any knowledge of the works of Shakespeare, and that this is a great prejudice in favour of the former; however, he candidly remarks, it is but a prejudice.

“The papers relative to the suit,” he says, “should be produced before the bar. *Hamlet* is one of the most admirable pieces of Shakespeare, as well as one of those which are oftenest represented. We shall faithfully lay it before the judges.”

PLAN OF THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET.

“The subject of *Hamlet Prince of Denmark* is pretty nearly the same with that of *Electra*. Hamlet, King of Denmark, was poisoned by his brother Claudius and his Queen Gertrude, who poured poison into his ear whilst he was asleep. Claudius succeeded the deceased, and a few days after the burying, the widow married the brother-in-law. Nobody had ever entertained the least suspicion of the late King Hamlet's being poisoned in the manner above related. Claudius reigns in peace.

“Two soldiers being upon guard before the gate of Claudius's palace, one says to the other, ‘How has your hour passed?’ the other answers ‘Very well, I have not heard a mouse stir.’ After some discourse of the same nature, the Ghost appears, dressed like the late King Hamlet; one of the soldiers says to his comrade, ‘Speak to the Ghost, you are a scholar.’ ‘That I will,’ says the other. ‘Stay and speak, Phantom, I command you.’ The apparition disappears without answering. The two soldiers, in astonishment, talk of it. The learned soldier remembers that he had heard that the same thing had happened at the time of the death of Cæsar; tombs were opened, the dead in their shrouds screamed and leaped about in the streets of Rome; it, without doubt, is the presage of some extraordinary event!

“At these words, the Ghost appears a second time; then one of the guards cries out, ‘Phantom, what would you have? what can I do for you? is your coming occasioned by any hidden treasures?’

“Then the cock crows. The Ghost walks off slowly. The sentinels propose striking it with a halberd in order to stop it, but it flies, and the soldiers conclude that it is customary with ghosts to vanish at the

crowding of the cock. 'For,' say they, 'at the time of Advent Christmas Eve, the bird of dawning sings all night, and then spirits dare not wander any longer; the nights are wholesome, the planets shed no bad influence, fairies and sorcerers are without power at so holy and blessed a season.'

"Observe by-the-bye, that this is one of the striking passages that Pope has marked with commas in his edition of Shakespeare, to make readers take notice of its excellence.

"After the Ghost has thus made his appearance, King Claudius, Gertrude his Queen, and the courtiers join in a conversation in the hall of the palace. Young Hamlet, son of the poisoned monarch, the hero of the piece, receives with sadness and melancholy the marks of friendship shown him by Claudius and Gertrude: this Prince was far from suspecting that his father had been poisoned by them, but he was highly displeased that his mother had so soon married the brother of her first husband.

"Gertrude dissuades her son from continuing to wear mourning for his father to no purpose. 'It is not,' says he, 'my coat as black as ink, nor the appearance of grief, which constitute the real mourning; this mourning is at the bottom of the heart, the rest is only vain parade.' He declares that he has an inclination to quit Denmark and go to school at Wittenburg. 'Dear Hamlet,' says the Queen, 'do not go to school at Wittenburg, stay with us!' Hamlet answers that he will endeavour to obey her. Claudius is charmed at the answer, and orders that all of his court should go and drink, whilst the cannons were fired off, though gunpowder was not invented."

Hamlet's soliloquy which follows is then paraphrased in the same spirit of veracious criticism. "Pope," he remarks here, "again gives notice to his readers that this passage is worthy of their admiration."

The *précis* of the story is continued in a literal translation of the advice which Laertes gives his sister upon the subject of the Prince's love for her, and by a similarly faithful transcript of the Ghost's address to Hamlet, when they return to the stage "quite familiar with each other."

"The King and Queen," he goes on, "talk a long time of the madness of the Prince. Ambassadors from Norway arrive at court and hear this accident. The good man, Polonius, who is an old dotard, much more crazy than Hamlet, assures the King that he will take care of this disordered person. 'Tis my duty,' says he; 'for what is duty? 'Tis duty—just as day is day, and night night, and time time; therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit, and loquacity the body, I will be brief. Your noble son is mad; for what is madness but being mad? In fine, madam, he is mad. This is fact; it is a great pity; it is a great pity it should be true; the only business now is to find the cause of the effect. Now the cause is that I have a

daughter!' To prove that it was love which had deprived the Prince of his senses, he reads to the King and Queen the letters that Hamlet had written to Ophelia. Whilst thus the King and Queen and all the court talk of the melancholy condition of the Prince, he arrives in great disorder, and by his discourse confirms the opinion that had been conceived of his madness; he, however, sometimes makes answers that discover a soul deeply wounded, and which are replete with good sense.

"The chamberlains, who have orders to amuse him, propose to him to hear a company of comedians, who were just arrived; Hamlet talks very rationally of plays. The players act a scene before him; he gives his opinion of it with great good sense. Afterwards, when he is alone, he declares that he is not so mad as he appears to be. He forms a resolution to avail himself of the above-mentioned players, and directs them to play a pantomime, in which one is to sleep and another to pour poison into his ear. It is very certain that if King Claudius is guilty, he will be greatly surprised when he sees the pantomime; he will then turn pale, his guilt will be seen upon his face; Hamlet will be sure of the crime, and will have a right to avenge. Thus said, thus done.

"The company comes and represents the scene in dumb show before the King, the Queen, and the whole court, and the dumb show is succeeded by a scene in verse.

"The King and Queen look upon these two scenes as highly impertinent. They suspect Hamlet of having played them a trick, and of not being quite so great a madman as he appeared to be; this idea gave them great perplexity: they trembled with fear of having been detected. What course could they take? King Claudius resolves to send Hamlet to England, upon pretext of curing his madness, and writes to his good friend the King of England, to desire it as a favour of him that he would hang the young traveller on the receipt of his letter. But the Queen is desirous of questioning and sounding Hamlet before his departure; and for fear he should do some mischief in his madness, the old chamberlain, Polonius, hides himself behind a tapestry hanging, in order to come to the Queen's assistance if there should be occasion.

"The Prince, who was mad, or pretended to be so, comes to confer with his mother Gertrude; in this way he sees in a corner King Claudius, who was seized with a fit of remorse; he is afraid of being damned for having poisoned his brother, married his widow, and usurped the crown. He kneels down and makes a short prayer—not worth repeating. Hamlet at first has an inclination to take that time in order to kill him; but, reflecting that Claudius is in a state of grace, he takes care not to kill him in such circumstances.

"This likewise is a passage which Pope's commas direct us to admire. Hamlet then, having deferred the murder of Claudius in

order to damn him, comes to confer with his mother; and notwithstanding his madness, overwhelms her with such bitter reproaches of her crime as to pierce her to the very heart. The old chamberlain, Polonius, is apprehensive of his carrying matters too far; he cries out for help behind the hanging. Hamlet takes it for granted that it was the King who had hidden himself there, to listen to their conversation. 'Ah, mother!' cries he, 'there is a great rat behind the hangings.' He thereupon draws his sword, runs to the rat, and kills the good Iaan Polonius.

"The good Lord Chamberlain was an old fool, and is represented as such, as has already been seen. His daughter, Ophelia, who no doubt resembled him in this respect, becomes raving mad when she is informed of her father's death; she runs upon the stage with flowers and straw upon her head, sings ballads, and then goes and drowns herself. Thus there are three mad people in the play—Ophelia, the chamberlain, and Hamlet, without reckoning the other buffoons who play their parts.

"The corpse of Ophelia is taken out of the river, and her funeral is prepared. In the meantime King Claudius had made the Prince embark for England. Hamlet, whilst upon his passage, had conceived a suspicion that he had been sent to London with some treacherous design: he finds in the pocket of one of the chamberlains, his conductor, the letter of King Claudius to his friend the King of England to despatch him the moment of his arrival. What does he do? He happened, luckily, to have the great seal of his father in his purse; he throws the letter into the sea, and writes another, which he signs with the name of Claudius, and requests the King of England to hang the bearer upon their arrival; then he folds up the whole packet, and seals it with the seal of the kingdom. This done, he finds a pretext for returning to court. The first thing he sees is two grave-diggers digging Ophelia's grave. These two labourers are also buffoons in the tragedy; they discuss the question whether Ophelia should be buried in consecrated ground after having drowned herself, and they conclude that she should be buried in Christian burial, because she was a young lady of quality. Then they maintain that labourers are the most ancient gentlemen upon earth, because they are of the same trade with Adam. 'But was Adam a gentleman?' says one of the grave-diggers. 'Yes,' answers the other, 'for he was the first that ever bore arms.' 'What, did he bear arms?' says the grave-digger. 'Without doubt,' says the other. 'Can a man till the ground without spades and pickaxes? He therefore bore arms; he was a gentleman.'

"In the midst of these fine harangues and the songs sung by these gentlemen in the parish church of the palace, arrives Prince Hamlet with one of his friends, and they contemplate the skulls found by the gravediggers. At last the skull of the King's jester is found, and it

is concluded that there is not any difference between the brain of Caesar or Alexander and that of this jester. In fine, the grave is made whilst they thus dispute and sing. Holy water is brought by the priests; the body of Ophelia is brought on the stage. The King and Queen follow the bier; Laertes, in mourning, accompanies the corpse, and when it is laid in the ground, frantic with grief, he leaps into the grave. Hamlet, who remembers he had once loved Ophelia, leaps in likewise. Laertes, enraged at seeing in the same grave with him the person who had killed the chamberlain Polonius (taking him for a rat), flies in his face; they wrestle in the grave, and the King causes them to be parted, in order to preserve decency in the funeral ceremonies. In the meantime, King Claudius perceives that it is absolutely necessary to despatch such a dangerous madman as Prince Hamlet, and since that young prince had not been hanged in London, it is thought highly proper that he should be despatched in Denmark.

"The artful Claudius has recourse to the following stratagem. He was used to poisoning. 'Hark ye,' says he to young Laertes, 'Prince Hamlet has killed your father, my great chamberlain. That you may have it in your power to revenge yourself, I shall propose to you a little piece of chivalry; I will lay a wager with you that in twelve passes you will not hit Hamlet three times. You shall fence with him before the whole court. You shall have a sharp foil, the point of which I have dipped in a poison exceedingly subtle. If you, unluckily, should not be able to hit the Prince, I will take care to have a bottle of poisoned wine ready for him upon the table. People that fence must drink. Hamlet will drink, and one way or other must lose his life. Laertes thinks the expedient for amusement and revenge admirably devised. Hamlet accepts the challenge; bottles are placed upon the table: the two champions appear with foils in their hands, in the presence of the whole Danish Court. They fence; Laertes wounds Hamlet with his poisoned foil. Hamlet, finding himself wounded, cries out 'Treachery!' and in a rage tears the poisoned foil from Laertes, stabs him and stabs the King; Queen Gertrude, in a fright, drinks in order to recover herself; thus she is poisoned likewise, and all four—that is, King Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, and Hamlet—die upon the stage.

"It is remarkable that an express just then arrives, that the two chamberlains who had sailed for England with the packet sealed with the great seal, had been despatched upon their landing. Thus there does not remain one person of the drama alive; but to supply the place of the deceased there is one Fortenbrass, a relation of the family, who had conquered Poland during the representation of the piece, and who comes at the conclusion of it to offer himself as a candidate for the throne of Denmark. This," concludes our commentator, "is the whole plan of the celebrated tragedy of *Hamlet*

—the masterpiece of the London Theatre! Such is the work that is preferred to *Cinna*!”

That the eighteenth century—a century renowned for its clever men, its accomplished women—could have been satisfied with so gross a travesty of so grand a drama, may well be thought astounding; but the solution may be found in the disposition of the age, whose type Voltaire may be considered.

The mind of the man who has been called “the perfection of mediocrity,” was alike common to the men and literature of the time. “Everywhere,” says a clever author, “you find wit, but little soul; much reason, little good sense; fine verses, no poetry; big words, and of conviction—none!”*

The madness, whether actual or simulated, of the sad and lonely Hamlet, has puzzled far more thoughtful ages. The never-satisfied meditation on human destiny, and the dark perplexity of the events of the world which is there shadowed forth with so masterly a hand, could hardly find an echo in a period of levity and never-ending sarcasm. How should such a period have any sympathy for the most amiable of misanthropes? The quiet sensibility which yields to every motive, and is borne away by every breath of fancy, which is distracted in the multiplicity of its reflections, and lost in the uncertainty of its resolutions,” required a far more serious state of feeling to understand and grapple with it; and a being who was or imagined himself to be called upon by Heaven to accomplish a task of retribution, and who must therefore renounce every ordinary condition of affection and happiness—becoming a sort of sacred outlaw, was likely to find but little sympathy with men who only forgave to Rousseau the appearance and forms of conviction, because they were persuaded he had none of the reality.

His age, therefore, and not Voltaire, should be blamed, and we should probably agree with Carlyle that “it was not till the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of *Hamlet* could find such wondering readers.”

C. E. MEETERKE.

* Hazlitt.

BRITAIN'S COAL CELLARS.

It would have been deemed a strange thought in the days of the Tudors, to suggest that England's greatness would one day depend,—or seem to depend,—on her stores of coal, a mineral then regarded as only an unpleasant rival of the wood log for household fires. When Shakespeare put into the mouth of Faulconbridge the words—

“This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself,”

he would have thought it a singular proviso that England should be watchful of her coal stores if she would preserve her position among the nations. And yet there is a closer connection between the present greatness of Britain and the mighty coal cellars underlying certain British counties than we are commonly prepared to acknowledge. Saxon steadiness and Norman energy have doubtless played their part in placing Britain in the position she now holds; but whatever may have been the case in past ages of our history, it is certain that at present there is much truth in Liebig's assertion, that England's power is in her coal. The time may come again, as the time has been, when we shall be less dependent on our coal stores,—when bituminous bankruptcy will not be equivalent to national bankruptcy; but if all our coal mines were at this moment rendered unworkable, the power of England would receive a shock from which it would be ages in recovering.

I have quoted an assertion made many years since by Baron Liebig. The assertion was accompanied by another not less striking. “Civilization,” he said, “is the economy of power; and English power is coal.” It is on this text that I propose now to comment. There has recently been issued a Blue Book, bearing in the most important manner on the subject of England's coal-supply. For five years fifteen eminent Commissioners have been engaged in examining the available evidence respecting the stores of coal contained in the various coal fields of Great Britain. Their inquiries were commenced soon after the time when the fears of the country on this subject were first seriously awakened; and were directed specially to ascertain how far those fears were justified by the real circumstances of the case. It will be well to compare the various opinions which were expressed before the inquiries were commenced, with the results which have now been obtained.

In the first place it should be noticed that the subject had attracted the attention of men of science many years ago. Some forty years* have passed since Dr. Buckland, in one of the Bridgewater Treatises, pointed to the necessity of a careful examination of our coal stores, lest England should drift unawares into what he called "bituminous bankruptcy." At that time the quantity of coal raised annually in England amounted to but about forty millions of tons. Ten years later the annual yield had risen to about fifty millions of tons; and then another warning voice was raised by Dr. Arnold. Ten more years passed, and the annual yield had increased to 88,685,214 tons, when Mr. Hull made the startling announcement that our coal stores would last us but about two centuries, unless some means were adopted to check the lavish expenditure of our black diamonds.

But it was undoubtedly the address of Sir W. Armstrong to the British Association, in 1863, which first roused the attention of the country to the importance of the subject. "The greatness of England," he said, "depends much upon the superiority of her coal, in cheapness and quality, over that of other nations. But we have already drawn from our choicest mines a far larger quantity of coal than has been raised in all other parts of the world put together; and the time is not remote when we shall have to encounter the disadvantages of increased cost of working and diminished value of produce." Then he summed up the state of the case as he viewed it. "The entire quantity of available coal existing in these islands has been calculated to amount to 80,000 millions of tons, which, at the present rate of consumption would be exhausted in 980 years; but with a continued yearly increase of 2½ millions of tons would only last 212 years."

* So far back as 1789, John Williams, in his "Natural History of the Mineral Kingdom," discussed the question of the "Limited Quantity of Coal in Great Britain." The following extracts are taken from an excellent paper on the exhaustion of our coal in the *Popular Science Review* for July, 1866, by Mr. Lemoran, Colliery Viewer. "I have no doubt," says Williams, "that the generality of the inhabitants of Great Britain believe that our coal mines are inexhaustible; and the general conduct of the nation, so far as relates to this subject, seems to imply that this is held as an established fact. If it was not a generally received opinion, would the rage for exporting coals be allowed to go on without limitation or remorse? But it is full time that the public were undeceived in a matter which so nearly concerns the welfare of this flourishing island. . . . When our coal mines are exhausted, the prosperity and glory of this flourishing and fortunate island are at an end. Our cities and great towns must then become ruinous heaps for want of fuel, and our mines and manufactories must fail from the same cause, and then, consequently, our commerce must vanish. In short, the commerce, wealth, importance, glory, and happiness of Great Britain, will decay and gradually dwindle away to nothing, in proportion as our coal and other mines fail." Mr. Williams also solves in a very summary manner the problem of England's fate after her coal stores shall be exhausted. "The future inhabitants of this island must live," says he, "like its first inhabitants, by fishing and hunting."

Other statements were not wanting, however, which presented matters in a more favourable light. Mr. Hussey Vivian, M.P., expressed the opinion that South Wales alone could supply all England with coals for 500 years. Mr. R. C. Taylor, of the Geological Society, said that our coal stores would suffice for 1,700 years. And there were some who adopted a yet more sanguine view of our position.

On the other hand, Mr. Edward Hull, of the Geological Survey, calculated that with an increase of but one million and a half of tons per annum,—considerably less than even the average increase for the preceding decade,*—our coals would last us but a little more than 300 years. Mr. Stanley Jevons, in his masterly treatise on “The Coal Question,” adopted a mode of considering the increase, which led to an even more unpleasant conclusion than any hitherto obtained. He observed that the quantity of coal raised in successive years is not merely increasing, but the amount of increase is itself increasing. “We, of course, regard not,” he said, “the average annual arithmetical increase of coal consumption between 1854 and 1863, which is 2,403,424 tons, but the average rate per cent. of increase, which is found by computation to be 3.26 per cent.” That is to say, for every hundred tons of coal consumed in one year, 103½ tons, or thereabouts, would be consumed in the next—taking one year with another. Without entering into technicalities, or niceties of calculation, it is easy to show the difference between this view of the matter and a view founded only on the average increase during so many years. Consider 10,000 tons of coal sold in one year, then Mr. Stanley Jevons points out that instead of that amount, 10,326 would be sold in the next; and so far we may suppose that the other view would agree with his. But in the next, or third year (always remembering, however, that we must take one year with another) the increase of 326 tons would not be merely doubled, according to Mr. Stanley Jevons; that is, the consumption would not be only 10,652 tons:—the 10,000 tons of the second year would be replaced by 10,326 tons in the third year, and the remaining 326 would be increased by 3½ tons for each hundred, or by rather more than 10½ tons; so that in all there would be 10,662½ tons, instead of 10,652. Now the difference in this third year seems small, though when it is applied to about nine thousand times 10,000 tons it is by no means small, amounting in fact to 95,000 tons; but when the principle is extended to sequent years its effects assume paramount importance. The small increase is as the small increase of a farthing for the second horse-shoe-nail in the well-known problem. The effects, after a few years have passed, correspond to the thousands of pounds by which the last shoe-nails of that problem increase the cost of the

* In 1854, the yield was 64,661,401 tons; in 1864, the yield was 92,787,873: the average increase per annum was therefore no less than 2,812,647 tons.

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horse. As Mr. Leonard Lemoran points out in the paper mentioned in the above note, if the assumed rate per cent. of increase continue, "we should draw in the year 1900 from our rocks more than 800 millions of tons, and in 1950 more than 2,000 millions.* About 800,000 miners are now (1866) employed in raising rather more than 92 millions of coals; therefore more than eight million miners would be necessary to raise the quantity estimated as the produce of 1950. One-third of the present population of Great Britain would be coal miners." Or as Mr. Jevons himself sums up our future, "If our consumption of coal continue to multiply for 110 years at the same rate as hitherto, the total amount of coal consumed in the interval would be 100,000 millions of tons." Now as Mr. Hull estimated the available coal in Great Britain within a depth of 4,000 feet, at 83,000 millions of tons, it followed, that adopting Mr. Jevons's mode of calculation, a century would exhaust "all the coal in our present workings, as well as all the coal seams which may be found at a depth of 1500 feet below the deepest working in the kingdom." It should be added, however, that Mr. Stanley Jevons mentioned 200,000 millions of tons as the probable limit of the coal supplies of Great Britain.

The opinion of Mr. Jevons respecting the probable rate of increase of our consumption was not accepted by the generality of those who examined the subject in 1865 and 1866. There were some, indeed, who considered that the assumption was "absurd in every point of view." In one sense, indeed, Mr. Jevons himself would have been ready to admit that his estimates would not be justified by the result. The observed rate of increase could not possibly be maintained beyond a certain epoch, simply because there would not be enough men to work the coal mines to the extent required. But, regarding the increase as indicating the requirements of the kingdom, it would matter little whether the necessary supply failed for want of coal or for want of the means of raising the coal. In other words, removing the question from the arena of geological dispute, and considering only the requirements of the country, we should have this disagreeable conclusion forced upon us, if Mr. Jevons's estimate is just, that England will not be able, a century or even half a century hence, to get as many coals from her subterranean cellars as she will then require. She may have the coals, but she will not have men enough to bring them to bank.

It is, perhaps, in this aspect, that the question assumes its chief

* I have obtained a somewhat different result from a computation I have just gone through. I make the consumption 291 millions in 1900, and 1446 millions in 1950. Mr. Lemoran seems to have taken the percentage at $3\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $3\frac{3}{4}$. It is worth noticing how seriously a small change in the percentage affects the result; the consumption in 1950 becoming 1760 millions of tons instead of 1446 millions.

interest for us. Rightly understood, the statements of Mr. Jevons were of vital importance; so important, indeed, that the nation might have looked forward to the results of the Commission much as a patient would await the physician's report of the result of a stethoscopic examination. The power of the nation residing—for the nonce at least—in her coal, the enforced consumption of coal at a rate which cannot be maintained (from whatever cause), means to all intents and purposes the decline and approaching demise of England's power as a nation. Furthermore, apart from all inquiries such as the Commissioners undertook to make, the mere statement of the successive annual yields was to be looked upon as of vital interest, precisely as the progressive waste of a consumptive patient's strength and substance suggests even more serious apprehensions than the opinion of the physician.

I have said that many eminent authorities held that the rate of increase assumed by Mr. Jevons would not actually prevail. But some went farther, and questioned whether the average annual arithmetical increase of the lately passed years would continue even for the next few years after the publication of Mr. Jevons's work. "Such a continued increase as that which has taken place during the last five years," wrote an excellent practical authority, "cannot continue for the next ten years,"—far less, therefore, that increasing rate of increase which Mr. Jevons had assumed. The same writer went farther even than this. For, after pointing out that the exportation of coal would probably be soon reduced, rather than undergo, as during the past, a steady increase, he added that "on every side there were evidences of the most decided character, warranting the supposition that the annual exhaustion of our coal fields would not at any period much exceed the hundred million tons which it had nearly reached" (in 1866).

One of the most interesting questions, then, which the Commissioners were called upon to decide was, whether, at least during the period of their labours, the anticipations of Mr. Jevons would be fulfilled or not. It is easy to compare his anticipations with those above quoted; or, rather, it is easy to determine whether Mr. Jevons's theory of an increasing increase, or the theory of a uniform average increase, accords best with the experience of the last five years. To make the comparison fairly we must adopt the figures on which his own estimate was founded. We have seen that he rejected the annual increase of 2,403,424 deduced from the records of the nine preceding years, and adopted instead an increase of 3½ per cent. year by year, taking one year with another. His own calculations gave for this year 1871 a consumption of 118 millions of tons,—an enormous increase on the annual consumption when he wrote. According to the view he rejected, the consumption for the present year is easily computed, though slightly different results

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will be obtained, according to the year we choose to count from. The annual increase above mentioned gives an increase of 24,034,240 tons in ten years, and if we add this amount to the consumption in 1861 (83,635,214 tons) we obtain for the current year a consumption of 107,669,454 tons. On the other hand, if we add eight years' increase to the consumption of 1863 (88,292,515 tons), we obtain 107,519,907 tons.* It will be seen that there is an important difference between the consumption for 1871, as estimated according to Mr. Jevons's view, and according to the average rate of increase in the nine preceding years. As the matter stood in 1865, the great question concerning the consumption of the current year would have been,—whether it would be nearer 118 millions, the estimate of Mr. Jevons; or to 107½ millions, the estimate, according to the annual rate of increase; or, lastly, to a number of tons, not much, if at all exceeding 100 millions.

The answer of the Commissioners comes in no doubtful terms. Judging from the consumption during the four years ending in 1870, the estimated consumption for the current year is no less than 115 millions, an amount approaching Mr. Jevons's estimate much more nearly than could be desired. Indeed, if we consider the imperfect nature of the statistics on which he founded his calculations, the agreement between his estimate and the observed result must be regarded as surprisingly close. Remembering the conclusion to which Mr. Jevons came with respect to the period for which our coal stores would last, and noticing the close agreement thus far between his anticipations and the result, we can well understand the warning tone of the report issued by the Commissioners. "Every hypothesis," they say, "must be speculative, but it is certain that if the present rate of increase in the consumption of coal be indefinitely continued, even in an approximate degree, the progress towards the exhaustion of our coal will be very rapid." Let it be remembered that the Commission was issued at the instance of those who took the more sanguine view, and that it included within its ranks such eminent authorities as Sir William Armstrong, Sir Robert Murchison, Professor Ramsay, Mr. John Hunt, and others of like experience in the subject under inquiry.

If, in the next place we compare Mr. Jevons's estimate of the quantity of coal available for use with the result obtained by the Commissioners, we find little to restore our confidence in the extent of time during which our coal stores may be expected to last. We have seen that 200,000 millions of tons had been supposed to be available; but the Commissioners find that "we now have an aggregate of 146,480 millions of tons, which may be reasonably expected

* The year 1863 was the last whose statistics were available for Mr. Jevons's purpose; and estimating from either 1860 or 1862 would give a result smaller than either of the above. Indeed, the consumption was less in 1862 than in 1861.

to be available for use." Again, it had been supposed that our coal mines could be worked to a depth of 4,000 feet, or to an even greater depth. "The difficulties in the way of deep mining," wrote Mr. Lemoran in 1866, "are mere questions of cost. It is important to notice that the assumption of 4,000 feet as the greatest depth to which coal can be worked, on account of the increase of temperature, is purely voluntary. The increase has been calculated at a rate for which there is no authority; and while we are saying our coal-beds cannot be worked below 4,000 feet, a colliery in Belgium has nearly approached that depth, and no inconvenience is experienced by the miners." But the Commissioners state that at a depth of only 2,419 feet in the Rosebridge mine (the deepest in England), the temperature is 94 degrees of Fahrenheit, or within four degrees of blood heat. "The depth at which the temperature of the earth would amount to blood heat," they add, "is about 3,000 feet." They express a belief that by the "long wall system" of working (a system as yet seldom adopted in the chief northern mines) it will be possible to reach a depth of 3,420 feet before this heat is attained; but it is by no means certain that this will prove to be the case.

On the other hand, it will be well to regard the more promising aspect of the question.

We must not forget, in the first place, that in all matters of statistical research there is room for misapprehension unless careful attention be paid, not merely to the observed facts, but to the circumstances with which those facts are more or less intimately associated. If we consider, for example, the progress of the consumption of our coal during the past fifteen years, we find that a law of increase exists, which is, as we have seen, easily expressed, and which, after being tested by a process resembling prediction, has been singularly confirmed by the result. But if we inquire into the various causes of the great increase in the consumption of coals, we find that while those causes have been increasing in activity—so to speak—to a degree quite sufficient to explain the observed consumption, they are yet such as in their very nature must needs be unable to pass beyond a certain range of increase. Thus the population of Great Britain has been steadily increasing, and at present the annual increase is itself increasing. Then the amount of coal used in inland communication is increasing, not only on account of the gradual extension of the railway network, but also on account of the increase of population, of commerce, and so on. Again, our commerce with other countries has increased with great rapidity since the year 1860, when the French treaty came into operation, and it will continue to increase with the increase of our population, of our means of communication within our own country as well as with foreign countries, and so on. But all these causes of increase are now growing in activity at a rate which must inevitably diminish. Our population cannot increase

beyond a certain extent, because the extent of the country will suffice for but a certain number of inhabitants. If emigration do not prevent increase beyond that number, other causes will, or else a much more serious evil than the exhaustion of all our coal stores awaits the country. Again, the requirements of inland communication will before long be so far met that no such rapid extension as is now in progress will be called for. After convenient communication has been established between all parts of the country—whether the process require the formation of new lines or of new services—no important increase can be required. As regards our commerce, its increase depends necessarily on the increase at present going on in the requirements of the country. Year by year Britain has a larger population, and the average requirements of each member of the population are also increasing. But we have seen that the increase of her population is necessarily limited; and, although, the increase of the requirements of her people may not be (strictly speaking) limited, yet it is manifest that, inasmuch as that increase depends on causes which are themselves approaching a limit, its rate must, after a time, continually diminish. Let it be understood that, when I speak of the requirements of the population, I do not mean only what they must obtain from other countries. The commerce of a country is the expression of the activity with which the nation is "earning its living," so to speak, and in a given population there is a limit to what is necessary for this purpose, precisely as there is a limit to the sum which an individual person in any given state of life requires for the maintenance of a given family. Indeed, although such comparisons are not always safe, we may in this case compare what may be called the commercial requirements of the nation with the requirements of the head of a family,—a merchant suppose. There are no limits to the degree of wealth which a merchant may desire to gain, but unquestionably there are limits to the income necessary to maintain his house and family and mercantile position. Supposing he were extending his gains far beyond his actual requirements, it would by no means imply his approaching ruin that there was a demonstrable limit to this extension. And in like manner, it would seem that, apart from the limits set by nature to the extension of our population, it need by no means be assumed that if our commerce showed signs of approaching a limit, the downfall of England's power would be at hand.

In fact, we cannot accept Mr. Jevons's figures for distant epochs without first inquiring whether it is likely that at those epochs the circumstances on which the consumption of our coal depends will be correspondingly changed. Supposing that 120 millions of coals suffice for the requirements of our present population, we can scarcely believe that 1,440 millions will be needed in 1950, unless we suppose that the population of Britain will be twelve times greater than at

present; or that the population will be even greater than this, since the consumption of coals upon our railways could scarcely be expected to increase in proportion to the population. Now no one believes that Britain will number 300 millions of inhabitants in 1950, or in 2950; the country could not maintain half that number, even though all her available stores of coal and iron, and other sources of commercial wealth were increased a hundredfold.

It is a mistake, indeed, to extend the results of statistical research very far beyond the time to which the facts and figures belong. It would be easy to multiply instances of the incorrectness of such a process. To take a single case.—When cholera has been extending its ravages in this country, the statistics of mortality from that cause, if studied with reference to four or five successive weeks, have indicated a law of increase, which is very readily expressed so as to accord well with the mortality during those weeks, and perhaps two or three following weeks. But if such a law were extended indefinitely it might be found to imply nothing short of the complete desolation of the country by cholera, within the space of a few years. Thus, if the deaths (from cholera) in five successive weeks were 20, 27, 35, 47, and 63,—numbers corresponding with the general characteristics of cholera mortality in the earlier stages of a visitation,—the weekly mortality a year later, estimated according to the observed percentage of increase, would be more than 173 millions! Now this method of estimation, though leading to this preposterous conclusion as respects a more distant epoch, would probably lead to tolerably correct results for the next week or two after that in which 63 persons died,—the estimated numbers being 84 and 110 for the next two weeks respectively.

It seems to me, therefore, that we are not justified, by the observed seeming fulfilment of Mr. Jevons's anticipations, in concluding that a hundred years hence the consumption of coals will be 2,000 millions of tons, or that the total consumption during the next 110 years will be 100,000 millions of tons. We might almost as safely infer that because a growing lad requires such and such an increase of food year by year, the grown man will need a similar rate of increase, and the septuagenarian require so many hundredweights and gallons of solid and liquid food *per diem*.

At present it does not seem possible to arrive at any definite conclusions respecting the probable consumption of coal in years to come. The range of observation is not sufficiently extended. It seems clear, indeed, that the epoch is not near at hand when the present law of increase will be modified. This is shown by the agreement of the observed results during the past five years with the anticipations of Mr. Jevons. It would be altogether unsafe to predict that the yearly consumption will not rise to 150 or 200 or even 250 millions of tons *per annum*, or to point to any definite stage at which

the present increasing rate of increase will be changed first into uniform (or arithmetical) increase, and thence into a decreasing rate of increase. But it appears to me that no question can exist that these changes will take place. We might even go further, and regard it as all but certain that the time will come when there will be no annual increase. Nay, unless the history of this country is to differ from the history of all other nations which have attained to great power, the time might be expected to arrive when there will be, year by year, a slow diminution in the commercial activity of Britain, and a corresponding diminution in the exhaustion of her coal stores. There is room for an amazing increase in Britain's power and greatness, room also for an unprecedented continuance of these attributes, while yet the coal stores of the country remain well supplied.

Let us conceive, for instance, that the greatest annual consumption of coal during the future years of England's existence as a great nation, should be set at three times her present annual consumption, or at 350 millions of tons. Few will regard this as an unduly low estimate when they remember that it is exceedingly unlikely that the present population of Britain will ever be tripled, and that a triple population could be commercially far more active (in relation to its numbers) than the present population, with no greater consumption of coal per head. Now, to begin with, if this enormous annual consumption began immediately, we should yet (with Mr. Jevons's assumption as to the quantity of available coal) have 570 years' lease of power instead of 110. But, as a matter of fact, so soon as we have recognised the principle that there is a limit to the increase of annual consumption, we are compelled to believe that that limit will be approached by a much gentler gradient, so to speak, than the same consumption as attained on Mr. Jevons's assumption. According to his view, in fact, an annual consumption of 350 millions of tons per annum will be attained early in the twentieth century; but, according to the theory which sets such a consumption as the highest ever to be attained, we should place its attainment several hundreds of years later. This is a vague statement, I admit, but the very fact on which I am mainly insisting is this, that the evidence at present in our hands is insufficient as a basis of exact calculation. Now if we set 500 years hence as the time when the annual consumption of coal will have reached the above enormous amount, we should set the total consumption during those centuries at about one half that due to an annual consumption of 350 millions of tons. In that case there would still remain coal enough to supply the country for 320 years at the same tremendous rate. In all, on these suppositions, 820 years would be provided for. These would be years of commercial activity far exceeding that of our own day—in fact they would be years during which Britain would be accumulating wealth at a rate so enormous that at the end of the era she would be not wholly

unprovided with the means of supporting her existence as a nation, apart from all reference to her mineral stores. It is indeed utterly inconceivable, I think, that Great Britain and her people will ever be able to progress at the rate implied by these suggestions. To conceive of Great Britain as arriving at ruin within a thousand years by the over rapid exhaustion of her coal stores, is, in fact, equivalent to supposing that she will attain in the interval to a wholly unprecedented—I had almost said a wholly incredible—degree of height and power.

As regards the evidence which has been adduced respecting the extent of the available coal supply, it is to be remarked that, on the whole, the result cannot be regarded as unfavourable. The more sanguine views entertained five or six years hence have not indeed been fully justified. Yet our coal supply has been shown to be enormous, even when considered with reference to the continually increasing exhaustion.

But it must be admitted that the question of the depth to which our coal mines may be conveniently or even possibly worked, has an unpleasantly doubtful aspect. Of the stores which the Commissioners regard as available a vast proportion must be mined out from depths far exceeding any which have been at present reached in England. It is not as yet clear how far the increase of depth will add to the cost and risk of working; nor do I propose to discuss a subject which can only be adequately dealt with by those who possess practical knowledge of the details of colliery working. I will content myself by quoting some remarks on the subject, in an inaugural address delivered by Mr. George Elliot (one of the Royal Commissioners) before the North of England Institute of Mining Engineers in 1868. "The great depth," he remarked, "at which many of our pits are worked, and the vast extent of their lateral ramifications, make it more than ever necessary that we should secure the best mode of rendering the supply of pure air certain, regular, and safe. It is maintained that ventilating by machinery ensures these desiderata; that the nicety with which mechanical appliances may be regulated, the delicate adjustment of power of which they are capable, and the complete safety with which they may be worked, place them far before the system they are intended to supersede. The extent of our coal supply will be materially increased by the improvement of which this is a type. . . . It is probable that the ordinary means of ventilation—whether by furnace or fan—may be aided by a change in the force or agency employed for the purposes of haulage and other independent work. As an instance of my meaning, I may mention that the apparatus which I have introduced in South Wales, and which, by means of compressed air used as a motive power instead of steam, draws trams and pumps water with complete success, is found to generate ice in an atmosphere which is naturally hot and oppressive. The mechanical usefulness of these new air-

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engines seems capable of indefinite extension; while as their cooling properties form a collateral advantage arising out of their use, it is at least possible that they may prove valuable auxiliaries to the more regular means of ventilation in extending the security and promoting the healthfulness of our mines. *The difficulties of ventilation once surmounted, the extent of coal at our disposal is incalculably increased.*"

In the address just quoted there are some striking suggestions as to the possibility of working those coal fields which extend below the sea on our east and west coasts, especially in the counties of Durham, Northumberland, and Cumberland. Mr. Elliot remarks that "for all practical purposes these fields are as entirely within the reach of the mining engineer as the ordinary workings out of which coal is hewed." It is known that in many districts the coal strata extend ten or twelve miles beyond the shore; and Mr. Elliot believes that by sinking ventilating shafts in the German Ocean the coal below may be safely worked. The idea seems somewhat daring; yet, after the feats of engineering which have been achieved in our day, there seems no valid reason for doubting that at least when the pressure of a failing coal supply begins to be felt, the means will be found for rendering these immense submarine coal stores available. As to the difficulty of transport, Mr. Elliot remarks that, according to his estimates, "transport would neither be more costly nor more laborious than it has been in days gone by to convey coal the same distance after it was brought to the surface inland." The enormous importance of the subject is shown by the fact that "out of the minerals obtainable in Durham alone, one-third," Mr. Elliot tells us, "may be held to lie under the sea, and that all coal fields having a similar inclination of strata, and bordering on the ocean, will be similarly enlarged. This at once disposes," he adds, "of some of the fears expressed as to the duration of our coal supply; and while I am quite aware that these theories may be challenged, they are not put forward without due deliberation, and I am content to stake my professional reputation on their practicability."

With regard to the future of this country, it appears to me that little anxiety need be entertained. Apart from the considerations I have urged, which seem to indicate that our consumption cannot long increase at the same rate as at present, it seems not unreasonable to anticipate that within the next few decades science will find the means of economising our coals in more ways than one. It does not indeed appear likely that any form of fuel will ever take the place of coal: but a portion of the work now derived from the consumption of coal, may be expected to be derived in future years from some of the other substances now coming into use. It may be hoped, also, that science may suggest means for bringing coals to the surface with less waste, and even at less cost, than at present. And in other ways the process of exhaustion may be more or less effectively checked.

But while we may thus look somewhat confidently forward, as I judge, to the future of our country, serious questions are suggested as to the future of the human race. The period during which a nation flourishes, long as it seems by comparison with the life of man, yet sinks into insignificance when compared with the period during which civilised men will bear sway upon the earth. The thousands of years during which the coal stores of the earth may be expected to last will pass away, and then the descendants of those now living on the earth will have to trust to other force supplies than those which we are now using so lavishly. It may seem fanciful to look so far forward, and yet by comparison with the periods which the astronomer deals with in considering the future of our earth, thousands of years are as nothing. As I have said elsewhere, "those thousands of years will pass as surely as the thousands which have already passed, and the wants entailed by wastefulness in our day will then be felt, and none the less that for so many years there had been no failure in the supplies contained within the great subterranean storehouse." It behoves us to consider thoughtfully the wants even of those distant eras. If the greatest good for the greatest number is to be regarded as the true rule for the conduct of intelligent beings, then unquestionably mere distance in point of time should not prevent us from anticipating the requirements of those remote descendants of ours. We should regard the consciousness of this duty and its performance as signs by which the superiority of our own over less civilised times is partly manifested. As man is in dignity higher than non-intelligent animals, in that he alone provides of his own forethought for the wants of his children, so our generation would be raised in dignity above preceding generations if it took intelligent charge of the wants of its remote descendants. We ourselves are now employing stores of force laid up for us by the unconscious processes of nature in long past ages. As Professor Tyndall has finely said, we are utilising the sun of the Carboniferous Epoch. The light "which streamed earthwards from the sun" was stored up for us by the unconscious activity of "organisms which living took into them the solar light, and by the consumption of its energy incessantly generated chemical forces." The vegetable world of that old epoch "constituted the reservoir in which the fugitive solar rays were fixed, suitably deposited, and rendered ready for useful application." What the vegetable world did for us unconsciously during the Carboniferous Epoch, the scientific world of our epoch must do for our remote descendants. While we are consuming the stores of force laid up in past ages for our benefit, we must invent the means for obtaining directly from the solar rays fresh and inexhaustible supplies of motive energy.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

FEMALE CULTURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Mrs. GARRETT-ANDERSON, in urging the other day that men and women should be taught the same things, said that she wondered men had not prescribed a different diet to women from that which they prescribed to themselves. It might be answered that women have, in fact, of their own accord, practised habits of eating and drinking which have the effect of a diet unlike that of men. But the reader may be amused to see by the side of Mrs. Garrett-Anderson's illustration one of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's upon the same subject. It occurs in a letter, dated March 6th, 1753, to her daughter, the Countess of Bute; to whom, as is well known, she addressed some of the most sensible counsels upon the education of the young that have ever come from human pen—though they have all the hardness and narrowness of the time. The lady says, first: "The same characters are formed by the same lessons." This, however, could only be true if the recipient of the lessons were "a constant quantity." "This," she proceeds, "inclines me to think (if I dare say it) that nature has not placed us in an inferior rank to men, no more than the females of other animals, where we see no difference of capacity"—[? ?]—"though, I am persuaded, if there was a commonwealth of rational horses (as Doctor Swift has supposed), it would be an established maxim among them that a mare could *not* be taught to pace."

Not criticising this, let us, just by the way, pick out another passage from the same letter: "The unjust custom of debarring our sex from the advantage of learning" [arises in part from] "the men fancying that the improvement of our understandings would only furnish us with the more art to deceive them, which is directly contrary to the truth. *Fools* are always enterprising, not seeing the difficulties of deceit or the ill consequences of detection. . . . Earl Stanhope used to say during his ministry that he always imposed upon the foreign ministers by telling them the naked truth; when, as they thought it impossible that that should come from the mouth of a statesman, they never failed to write information to their respective courts directly contrary to the assurances he gave them." I have seen the maxim here in question attributed to Franklin; but it is older than even Earl Stanhope. Probably a hundred people have hit upon it without concert or derivation.

Turning the page in search of another passage about the education of women, which is, I find, too long to quote, I alight upon the

following striking touch—which, however, has only an indirect bearing on the culture of the times: “I return many thanks to Lord Bute for the china, which I am sure I shall be very fond of, though I have not yet seen it. I wish for three of Pinchbec’s watches, shagreen cases and enamelled dial-plates. When I left England they were five guineas each. You may imagine they are for presents; one for my doctor, who is exactly Parson Adams in another profession; the others for two priests, to whom I have some obligations.” These letters, the reader will remember, are dated from Louvère.

Turning now to the periodical literature for ladies of the same date, or a little later, we find exactly the same kind of claims made in behalf of women—claims, that is, for equality of faculty and position, and similarity of culture. The same kind of complaints as we have nowadays of the ordinary boarding-school culture. The same kind of proposals for an enlarged curriculum. The same kind of demands that girls should be taught cooking, dressmaking, and household economy. The same kind of criticism of certain small practices, such as “giving vails to servants;” and similar proposals for the training of skilled nurses. We also find a striking resemblance, in minor matters, to the modern lady’s magazine. Of course there are the fashions; but there are also the correspondents, who want recipes for “flushing,” red hands, the removal of superfluous hairs, the renewal of hair, the removal of what are stupidly called “worms” in the face, and all the rest of it. The papers on medical topics and the nursing of children are, apparently, much fuller than we see in our times, and the treatment of measles is very amply discussed. But not even “Liebig’s Malted Food Extract” for children is new, for we find a physician prescribing a sort of “panada,” with small beer in it. Then there are, just as nowadays, riddles of various kinds. There is an “enigmatical list of young lady’s (*sic*) at Horsham, Sussex;” and “an enigmatical list of gentlemen residing at Dartford, in Kent.” The use of the rod in education is one of the topics introduced; and it is unequivocally condemned—with regard to boys. The question of its use in bringing up girls is not raised, as it has been under our own very eyes of late.

There is in these magazines more coarseness of speech than we use in these times, and there is no distinction in this respect in favour of the ladies’ magazines as distinguished from the gentlemen’s—at least, I cannot discover anything of the kind. However, the moral tone generally is high. A lady who writes to inquire if she may safely marry a man who has hitherto kept a mistress, is advised by the Minerva of the magazine that such a man is not worth marrying. There is a plea “for making divorcees more easy and general.” The point of the following lies, of course, in the closing sentences about dress:—

"TO THE MATRON.

"Dear Madam,—I have no patience with the men. I must, therefore, make an application to you. I have been talked to, admired, and complimented for my beauty these five years; but though I am just arrived to the age of nineteen, see not the smallest prospect of being settled—I declare I have almost lost all hopes, and am monstrously afraid I shall increase the catalogue of old maids. What a horrid idea! To make the matter a thousand times worse, I have had the galling mortification to see above half a dozen of my most intimate friends, the ugliest girls you can conceive, settled perfectly to their satisfaction.—I begin, indeed, to think there is nothing at all in beauty. What a deal of pains have I taken to improve my face and my shape! But if you cannot put me in a way to make something of myself after all, I will actually unfrizzle my hair, throw my rouge into the fire, stuff a cushion with my bustle, press down my handkerchief to my bosom, and, in short, appear exactly as nature has made me: I am absolutely weary of taking so much trouble for nothing.—I wait for your answer with impatience—I am always in a hurry, but

"Your very humble servant,

"HARRIOTT HASTY."

In our own day we have heard of fine ladies who conceal large coarse ears with artificial hair, and wear small ones of gutta-percha, but "Harriot Hasty" does not appear to have got quite so far as that. There is a case reported in these magazines of a lady who was killed by over-painting, or enamelling; *i.e.*, from the constant choking up of the pores.

One peculiarity of this ladies' literature is the freedom with which men's persons and their dress are criticised. The following is a mild specimen:—

"THE STUDIOUS SLOVEN.

"Philo, though young, to musing much inclin'd,
A shameless sloven, in his gown had din'd;
From table sneaking with a sheepish face,
Before the circle was dismiss'd with grace,
And smoking now, his desk with books o'erspread,
Thick clouds of incense roll around his head;
His head, which save a quarter's growth of hair,
His woollen cap long since scratched off, was bare:
His beard, three days had grown, of golden hue,
Black was his skirt, unseemly to the view;
Cross-legged he sate, and his ungarter'd hose,
Each meagre limb, half hide, and half expose:
His cheek he lean'd upon his hand, below
His nut-brown slipper hung upon his toe."

The ladies seem to have been especially offended by the exposure of the men's knees from the sliding up of the breeches above the stocking.

The musical pieces that are occasionally given are, as might be expected, very poor. But the news of the day, including the parliamentary intelligence, is most fully reported. The political references would be unintelligible to half the women of the present day. One is struck by the very large space occupied by the drama. Plays are

given at full length. In other cases we have a long account of the "new piece," with the prologue and epilogue, and the full "cast" of the characters. But private theatricals at a boarding-school are severely denounced, as likely to demoralise the young ladies.

The Girl of *that* Period—to adopt a slang expression—seems to have been not very unlike the Girl of *the* Period; at least, the following occurs in the "Lady's Intelligencer" department:—

"We are positively assured from the best authority, that a number of females of strict virtue, and unblemished reputation, have formed themselves into a committee in order to find out ways and means to stop the alarming progress of licentiousness in the female world, and to make all those fair ones ashamed of their conduct, who are not afraid, so great is their intrepidity, to expose themselves in the most public manner by the looseness of their behaviour: not only deviating widely from the line of decorum, but throwing themselves into the most indiscreet situations."

Nor, to employ another slang word, do women appear to have been less fond of "the sensational" then than they are now. See the following

"ADVERTISEMENT."

"For the entertainment of those ladies who are passionately fond of the terrible graces, and are particularly attached to those situations which put sensibility upon the rack, will be speedily published, in one volume Folio,

"A Collection of the most barbarous, bloody, and inhuman Murders—(Rapes included)—that ever were committed in any part of the known world: printed with red ink, that the pages may have a sanguinary appearance, and adorned with Cuts, in the most striking style; by the greatest masters, in their boldest manner:—published by Samuel Slaughter, near Butcher row."

Who can withhold a smile at the innocent syntax which includes "rapes" among "murders?"

Most of the literary matter appears to be contributed gratis, and the editor flatters and begs of his correspondents in the most abject manner. When the Lord George Gordon riots occur he is almost dignified, for once, in the notices

"TO OUR CORRESPONDENTS."

"We think it incumbent on us to declare, that the unsettled state of the metropolis during the late scenes of riot and anarchy, and the anxiety which our numerous correspondents in the country might feel for the safety of their friends in this capital, has obliged us to postpone the favours of several of our patronesses, which, though delayed, are decreed to be inserted. Permit us to add, that the matter pouring in upon us from all quarters relative to the late commotions will enable us to give a more explicit and more authentic detail of the legal proceedings against the rioters, either with respect to their commitments or their trials, than are, or can be given, in any other. We have not been at liberty, amidst the late numerous conflagrations, and scenes of devastation, to find out the particular month or year when the late Dr. Cook's receipt for preventing the growth of superfluous hair, was published; but, if E. G. will give us longer grace, we intend to satisfy her."

A very large quantity of the matter is translated from the French;

Rousseau, Voltaire, and, above all, Madame de Genlis, and the author (Berquin ?) of "*L'Ami des Enfants*," being laid under contribution:—

"We must beg leave to inform our friendly correspondent, *Henrietta R—*, that our store is entirely exhausted, and request her to send us a recruit early in the month.

"The translator of *Rousseau's Emilie* [*sic*] will excuse us for taking the liberty of desiring either an immediate supply, an apology for the suspension, or leave to continue the remainder of the work ourselves, as it was always our principle to gratify, not to torture curiosity."

The following is noticeable, but it will convey a very feeble impression to the reader who does not happen to know the sort of advertisement that in those times did actually find its way into periodicals:—

"Our Friend and good Customer, will be pleased to advert, that the advertisements complained of are never inserted even in a corner of the Magazine: though sometimes a proposal in that line is stitched up with the Magazine, which may easily be taken out and destroyed (by the purchaser) if not agreeable."

In spite of the place which some of the contributors claimed for cookery in female education, the editor is terribly indignant at being asked a question about melted butter:—

"With respect to the frequent requests received from *Bessy Bluit* on the important subject of melting butter without flour, &c., we must refer her either to her own cook, or to those which are employed in the genteel houses and taverns of her own place of residence, or those of the hotels in the metropolis: but in answer to her menace of troubling us with a letter every week, tho' our Magazine is published only once a month, we will favour her with an extract which we have received on account of her importunities, and which, were it not for her threatenings, we intended to have suppressed. The author, after expressing her surprize on the *Queries respecting melted butter*, proceeds thus:—'I was angry, and thought it an affront even to ask such a question. Did the lady suppose you made cooking your study? She need not wait a month for an answer; I suppose any good cook would have informed her. Her last letter, pardon me, does her and her sex no honour. With respect to her child, had she applied to any physician, he could have told her how far melted butter might affect her or her child, &c.'"

One peculiarity of this literature remains to be noticed. Love-correspondence, with scarcely any disguise as to names, was freely admitted, in the form of verse. The following is a very mild sample in point:—

"To Mr. P—.

"On his neglecting a very amiable young Lady for the Author.

"Why thus ungenerously disown
That —, the fairest girl in town,
Can't fix your roving heart;
That heart which she so justly claims,
For which she burns with mutual flames,
And you've returned in part.

"If fame says true, there's none so fair,
Possess of charms to banish care,
In virtue's garb array'd,

Minerva deigns her handmaid be,
Reason approves her wise decree,
Nor can a fault decry.

"If you this female disregard,
Think not another takes your word,
Nor dare presume to hope
That every fair who lends an ear
To what the fickle P— declares
Will not that faithless doubt.

"ANNA L— G—."

In numerous cases the addresses of the persons concerned are given, with only the suppression of a few letters.

I have reserved to the last what I think the tit-bit of my little collection—which could, of course, be made much larger. Before me lies

"A short treatise upon arts and sciences, in French and English, by Question and Answer. The ninth edition, revised and carefully corrected. A Work very useful to those who desire to improve themselves in the *French Tongue*, and containing a great Variety of Subjects. By John Palairt, French Master to their Royal Highnesses the Duke, the Princess Mary, and the Princess Louisa. London, printed for F. Wingrave, successor to Mr. Nourse, in the Strand. MDCCXCII."

When this tutor of royal princesses comes to treat of poetry he surpasses himself. The following is his specimen of the sonnet:—

"SONNET.

"As Phillis, undress'd, in a sweet summer's night,
Was walking alone, and the meadow adorning,
All nature, amaz'd at so pleasing a sight,
Took her for Aurora, and thought it was morning.

"The earth pour'd out flowers to delight the fair queen,
To salute her, the birds in a concert conspire,
And the stars, her bright eyes when once they had seen,
O'ercome by their lustre, began to retire.

"Phœbus, resolving these faults to amend,
New harness'd his horses, new painted each ray.
But when he survey'd her, asham'd to contend,
To Thetis return'd, and left her to give day."

The Tutor closes the subject by putting into the mouth of the royal catechumen the following stupendous dictum:—

"Q. Is poetry a useful study?

"A. Every body likes it, it is true, and the greatest wits have always given their mind entirely up to it. But notwithstanding that, it is, in my opinion, the most unprofitable of all the studies, and the fittest to render incapable of any other study those that apply themselves to it."

Waiter, clear away! An analysis of the dominant ideas in the culture of those times would occupy many pages—and the reader must be allowed time to digest this truly "royal" answer.

HENRY HOLBEACH.

PATIENTIA.

ToIL on, O troubled brain,
With anxious thoughts and busy scenes oppress;
Ere long release shall reach thee. A brief pain!
Then—Rest!

Watch still, O heavy eyes,
A little longer must ye vigil keep;
And lo! your lids shall close at morning's rise
In sleep.

Throb yet, O aching heart,
Still pulse the flagging current without cease;—
When you a few hours more have played your part,
Comes Peace!

Bear up then, weary soul!
Short is the path remaining to be trod—
Lay down the fleshly shroud, and touch the goal—
Then—God!

TOM HOOD.

A SONNET.

“Abierunt ad plures.”

LIKE some poor shipwrecked mariner I stand;
Weak, wounded, weary; by the ocean thrown
Upon a rock, far out of sight of land,
With billows closing-in on every hand.
My friends are going,—I am left alone;
My life is being swallowed-up by graves,
And day by day my earth has narrower grown
Before the spread of those green churchyard-waves
Yet is my trust in Thee, O Lord, the more,
Knowing Thou garnerest this love for me;
And evermore my storm-worn spirit craves
The blissful land where there is no more sea,
Knowing full well, that on that happy shore
The love Thou hast absorbed, Thou wilt tenfold restore.

TOM HOOD.

HANNAH.

A. Nobel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY DUNSMORE was a shrewd and far-seeing woman. She responded with the utmost civility to all Miss Bertha Rivers's advances, and planned no end of gaieties for her and Hannah, from which the Rivers family might plainly see—and she meant them to see—that she desired her friend Miss Thelluson's visit to be made as pleasant as possible.

But fate and Hannah's own will stood in the way. Adeline declined more rapidly than any one expected; and it soon became evident that she was never likely to quit those dull lodgings in Harley Street, except to be taken back to Easterham in the one peaceful way;—as however far off they died, it had always been the custom to carry home all the Riverses. Even Adeline herself seemed to understand this.

"I don't want to stir from here—it is too much trouble," she said one day to Hannah, now daily beside her. "But, afterwards, tell them they may take me home. Not to the Grange—that never was home—but to the Moat-House. Let them have me one night in the drawing-room there, before they put me under the daisies. And let Bernard read the service over me. And—you may tell him and them all, that I was not sorry to die—I did not mind it—I felt so tired!"

Nevertheless

"On some fond breast the parting soul relies,"

And that breast was for Adeline, not her husband's, but Hannah's. Of any one else's nursing she testified such impatience—perhaps feeling instinctively that it was given more out of duty than love—that gradually both Mr. Melville and Bertha let her have her own way. Things ended in Miss Thelluson's spending most of her time, not in the Dunsmores' lively mansion, but in that dull drawing-room, from whence, except to her bed-room, Adeline was never moved.

"Do stay with her as much as you can," entreated Bernard, who ran up for a day to London as often as he could, but who still saw no more than brothers usually see, the mere outside of his sister's life. He knew she was doomed; but, then, the doctors had

said Adeline was consumptive, and not likely to live to be old. "And she has had a happy life, married to the good fellow whom she was always fond of. Poor Adeline! And she has grown so much attached to you, Hannah. She says you are such a comfort to her."

"I think I have rather a faculty for comforting sick people: perhaps because doing so comforts me."

But Hannah did not say—where was the use of saying?—that this comfort was to her not unneeded. The uncertainty of her present position; the daily self-suppression it entailed—nay, the daily hypocrisy, or what to her honest nature felt like such,—were so painful, that sometimes when Bernard appeared, she did not know whether she were glad or sorry to see him. But everybody else—even to the Dunsdales—seemed heartily glad. And no one seemed to have the slightest suspicion of any bond between Rosie's aunt and Rosie's father except little Rosie. Sometimes this was to her a relief—sometimes an inexpressible pain.

"Good-bye, and God bless you for all your goodness to my sister," said Bernard one Saturday as he was going back to Easterham. "They will all bless you one of these days," added he tenderly,—all he could say, for he and she were not alone. They seldom were alone now. Opportunities were so difficult to make, and when made, the fear of being broken in upon in their tête-à-têtes caused them to feel awkward and uncomfortable—at least, Hannah did.

"Good-bye," she responded, with a sad, inward smile at the phrase "one of these days." Did it mean when they should be married? But that day might never come, or come when they were quite elderly people, and hope deferred had drained their hearts dry of all but the merest dregs of love. And the picture of the woman who might have been Bernard's wife, happy and honoured, accepted by his family, welcomed by his neighbours, reigning joyfully at the House on the Hill, and finally succeeding to the Moat-House, to be there all that a Lady Rivers should be—presented itself bitterly to Hannah's imagination. She had taken from him the chance of all this, and more, and given him in return—what? A poor, weary heart, which, though it was bursting with love, could not utter more than that cold "good-bye."

But when she had said it and returned to Adeline's bedside, Hannah forgot the troubles of life in the solemnity of fast-advancing death.

"It is hard Bernard is obliged to go," the sick girl said pitifully. "He likes to sit with me a little, I can see that. *They* do not; and therefore I don't want to have them. Besides, I can't have one of them without having both; and I won't have both. Nobody could expect it."

"No," said Hannah, feeling sorrowfully that it was useless to argue

against what had grown almost into a monomania, though the poor sick girl had still self-control enough not to betray herself, except in incidental, half-intelligible words like these. Better leave it thus, and let her sorrow die with her—one of the heart-wounds which nobody avenges; one of the thefts for which nobody is punished.

At length, just in the middle of the London season, when, one summer morning, Mayfair lay in the passing lull between the closing of opera and theatres, and the breaking-up of late balls, a cab thundered up to the Earl of Dunsmore's door. It was Mr. Melville coming to fetch Miss Thelluson to his wife. She was dying.

And then Hannah found out that the young man had some feeling. Full of strength and health himself, he had never really believed in Adeline's illness, still less her approaching death, till now; and it came upon him with a shock indescribable. Overwhelmed with grief, and something not unlike remorse, during the twelve hours she still lingered he never quitted her side. Careless as he had been to his living wife, to a wife really dying he was the tenderest husband in the world. So much so, that she once turned to Hannah with a piteous face—

"Oh, if this could only last! Couldn't you make me well again?"

But she could not be made well again; and—it might not have lasted—this late happiness which gave her peace in dying. Poor Adeline! it was better to die. And when Hannah watched the big fellow, now utterly subdued by the emotion of the hour, insist upon feeding his wife with every mouthful of her last food, as tenderly as if she were a baby,—sit supporting her on the bed, motionless for hours, till his limbs were all cramped and stiff—sadder than ever seemed the blind folly, perhaps begun in a mistake on both sides, which had ended in letting a poor heart first starve for love, and then grow poisoned with a nameless jealousy, until between the hunger and the poison it died.

For Adeline did die: but her death was peaceful, and it was in her husband's arms.

"He is fond of me, after all, you see," she whispered to Hannah in one of Herbert's momentary absences. "It was very foolish of me to be so jealous of Bertha. Perhaps I should not, had it been a thing I could have spoken about. And don't speak of it now, please. Only if he ever wants to do as his father did, and the law will allow it, tell him he may as well marry Bertha as anybody;—I shall not mind."

But to Bertha herself, although she kissed her in token of amity and farewell, Adeline said not a word. The secret wound, vainly plaistered over, seemed to bleed even though she was dying.

Her end had come so suddenly at last, that no one from Easterham had been sent for, and when Bernard arrived next morning at his accustomed hour, it was to find a shut-up house and his sister

"away." Then, in the shock of his first grief, Hannah found out, as she had never done before, how close, even with all their faults, was the tie which bound him to his own people. It touched her deeply—it made her love him better, and honour him more; and yet it frightened her. For there might come a time when he had to choose, deliberately and decisively, between the love of kindred and the love of her; and she foresaw, now more clearly than ever, how hard the struggle would be.

In the absorption of her close attendance upon Adeline, she had heard little of what was going on in the outside world. Even "the bill"—the constant subject of discussion at Dunsmore House—had faded out of her mind; till such phrases as "read the first time," "read the second time," "very satisfactory majority," and so on, met her ear. Once they would have been mere meaningless forms of speech, now she listened intently, and tried hard to understand. She did understand so far as to learn that there was every probability this session of the bill's passing the Commons, and being carried up to the House of Lords, where, upon a certain night, a certain number of noblemen, some biassed one way or other by party motives, and a proportion voting quite carelessly, without any strong feeling at all in the matter, would decide her happiness and Bernard's for life.

It was a crisis so hard, a suspense so terrible, that perhaps it was as well this grief came to dull it a little. Not entirely. Even amidst his sorrow for his sister, Hannah could detect a nervous restlessness in Mr. Rivers's every movement; every day, too, he sought eagerly for the newspaper, and often his hands actually trembled as he took it up and turned at once to the parliamentary notices. But he never said one word to Hannah, nor she to him; indeed, this time, they were never alone at all.

Adeline was to be buried at home, and Mr. Melville begged that Hannah would accompany Bertha, and take her place, with his wife's sisters and his own, at the funeral. Lady Rivers, in a note, asked the same; adding a cordial invitation that she should stay at the Moat-House. Hannah looked at Bernard.

"Yes, go," he said; "I wish it. They are very grateful to you for your goodness to her. And I want you," he continued in a low tone, "to try to be one of us—which you may be before very long."

This was all; but Hannah felt forced to obey, even though it cost her the first parting from her child. Only a three-days' parting however; and Bernard seemed so glad that she should go.

She, too, as she sat with the other three mourners—one in each corner of the silent railway carriage—and watched the soft rain falling on the fields and reddening hedges, under which, here and there, appeared a dot of yellow—an early primrose—she was conscious in her heart of a throb of hope responding to the pulses of the spring; and, once suddenly looking up at Bernard, she fancied he felt it too.

It was nature, human nature; and human passion, suppressed but never crushed, waking out of its long sleep, and crying unto God to bless it with a little happiness—even as He blesses the reviving earth with the beauty of the spring.

Miss Thelluson's welcome at the Moat-House, mournful as it was, was kind; for they had all been touched by her kindness to the dead, and sorrow strikes the tenderest chord in every heart. She had never liked Bernard's people so well, or been drawn to them so much, as during that quiet evening when poor Adeline's coffin rested a night under the Moat-House roof; or the day after, when with all the family she followed it to its last resting-place.

It was a curious sensation. To stand as one of them—these Riverses, whom she loved not, at best merely liked—well aware how little they had ever liked her, and how ignorant they were of the tie which bound her to them. Guiltless as she knew herself to be, she was not without a painful feeling of deception, that jarred terribly upon her proud and candid spirit. She scarcely said a word to Bernard, until he whispered, "Do speak to me now and then, or they will think it so strange." But even then her words were formal and few.

She had meant to leave on the third day, for she yearned to be back with her darling; but fate came between. Sir Austin, long an invalid, and almost a nonentity in the family, passed, the night after his daughter's funeral, suddenly and unawares, into the silent dignity of death. When Hannah came down next morning, it was to find the Moat-House plunged once more into that decent, decorous affliction which was all that could be expected of them under the circumstances.

They begged her to stay a little longer, and she stayed. There was a good deal to be done, and the ladies soon found out how well Miss Thelluson could do it. Also, not being a relative, she could see the visitors, and retail to the family the wide-spread sympathy expressed for it at Easterham, and for many miles round. "You are such a comfort to us," they said; and Bernard, whom his father's death seemed to affect more deeply than Hannah had expected, said, in his entreating eyes, "You are such a comfort to me." So, what could she do but stay?

A few days more, and the Rivers vault was again opened; and Miss Thelluson stood beside it, with all the Rivers family, except the new Sir Austin, of whom nobody spoke, except the Easterham lawyer, who lamented confidentially to Hannah that Mr. Rivers should be kept out of his title, though it could not be for more than a few years. The hapless elder brother, whose mind grew weaker and weaker every day, though his body was strong enough, might at any time have some fit that would carry him off, and prevent his being an encumbrance longer.

"And then," whispered the lawyer, "Mr. Rivers will be Sir Bernard; and what a fine position he will hold! one of the finest

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in the county. What a pity he has no heir—only an heiress! But of course he will now marry immediately. Indeed, he owes it to his family."

Hannah listened, as she was now learning to listen—teaching her poor, mobile, conscious face the hardness of marble. Her heart, too, if possible; for these torments, so far from lessening, would increase day by day. How she should ever bear them? She sometimes did not know.

The family had just come out of the study, where the will had been read, and were settling down to that strange quiet evening known in most households, when, the dead having been taken away and buried out of sight, the living, with an awful sense of relief as well as of loss, try to return to their old ways—eat, drink, and talk as usual. But it was in vain; and after a silent dinner, Bernard went back to the examination of papers in the study. Thence he presently sent a message for help.

"I suppose that means Miss Thelluson," said Bertha with a half laugh, which Lady Rivers gravely extinguished.

"Go, my dear. I daresay your brother-in-law finds you more useful to him than any one else." So Hannah went.

Bernard was sitting—his head in his hands. It was a white, woe-begone face that he lifted up to Hannah.

"Thank you for coming. I thought perhaps you might. I wanted comfort."

Hannah said a few commonplace but gentle words.

"Oh no, it is not that. I am not sorry my poor old father is away. It was his time to go. And for me, there will be one less to fight against, one less to wound."

He said the latter words half inaudibly—evidently not meaning her to hear, but she did, at least some of them. A wild, bitter answer came to her lips, but this was not the time to utter it. She merely replied by an offer of help, and sat down to fulfil it. He showed her what to do, and they went on working silently together for nearly half an hour.

But the extremes of human emotion are not so far apart as they seem. Keen and real as the young man's grief was, he was a young man still, and when the woman he loved sat beside him, with her sweet grave look, and her calm, still manner, another passion than grief began to stir within him.

"Hannah," he cried, seizing her hand, "are you happy, or miserable—as I am? or, which seems most likely, have you no feeling at all?"

She looked up. It was not a face of stone.

"Put your work away—what does it matter? Talk to me, Hannah. Think how long it is since you and I have had a quiet word together."

"Can I help that?"

"No,—nor I. We are both of us victims—tied and bound victims in the hands of fate. Sometimes I think she will get the better of us, and we shall both perish miserably."

"That is a very melancholy view to take of things," said Hannah, half smiling. "Let us hope it is not quite true."

"My bright, brave-hearted woman! If I had you always beside me, I should not go down. It is being alone that sinks a man to despair. Still, suspense is very hard."

And then he told her what she had not been before aware of,—that the bill had safely passed the House of Commons; that Lord Dunsmore and other peers, a rather strong party, hoped even in the House of Lords, which had hitherto always thrown it out, to get this year a sufficient majority to carry it through and make it the law of the land.

"And then, Hannah, we can be married—married immediately."

He gasped rather than uttered the words. Passion resisted had conquered him with double force.

"But—your own people?"

"They like you now—appreciate you, even as Lady Dunsmore does." (He did not see, and Hannah had not the heart to suggest, that perhaps it was in consequence of that appreciation.) "Besides, whether or not, they must consent. They cannot go against me. My father has left everything in my hands. I am, to all intents and purposes, the head of the family. It is that which makes me so anxious. Should the bill not pass—But it shall pass!" he cried impetuously, "and then no power on earth shall prevent me from marrying the woman I choose—and that is you!"

"Strange, strange!" murmured Hannah, half to herself, and dropped her conscious face, and felt more like a girl than she had done for many years. For she had no duties to think of; her child was away, there was only her lover beside her. Her lover, wooing her with a reality of love, a persistent earnestness, that no woman could either question or mistake.

"You are not quite colourless, I see, my white lily. You will not always shrink back when I want to take you to my heart? You will creep in there some day, and make it feel warm again, instead of cold and empty and lonely, as it is now. Hannah, how soon, supposing the bill passes this month, how soon will you let me marry you?"

They were standing together by the fire, and Bernard had just put his arm round her. She turned towards him, she could not help it; it was so sweet to be thus loved. Hand in hand, and eye to eye, they stood for the moment, yielding to present joy and future hope, absorbed in one another, thinking of nothing beyond themselves, seeing and hearing nothing, when the door opened, and Lady Rivers stood right in front of them.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, and started back as if she had trod on a snake.

They started back, too—these guilty-innocent lovers. Instinctively they started back from one another; and then Bernard recovered himself.

Vexatious as the crisis was—though he looked as if he would have cut off his hand rather than have had it happen—still, now that it had happened, he was too much of a man not to meet it—too much of a gentleman not to know how to meet it decorously. He moved back again to Hannah's side and took her hand.

"Well, Lady Rivers, had you anything to say to me?"

"Well, Bernard Rivers, and what have you to say for yourself? And what has this—this young woman—to say for herself, I should like to know?"

"If you mean Miss Thellason, her answer is as brief as my own must be. It is now many months since she promised to be my wife as soon as our marriage can be lawfully carried out. In the meantime we are friends, close friends; and, as you may have observed, we also consider ourselves engaged lovers. Hannah, do not distress yourself; there is no need.

And in the face of his step-mother he put his protecting arm round her—she was trembling violently—and drew her head on his shoulder.

There are some people whom to master you must take by storm. Hold your own and they will let you have it; perhaps even respect you the more; but show the slightest symptom of weakness, and they will trample you into the dust. Bernard knew perfectly well with whom he had to deal, and took his measures accordingly.

Lady Rivers—utterly astounded, less perhaps by the fact itself, than by the cool way in which Bernard had taken its discovery, simply stood and stared.

"I never knew anything so dreadful; never in all my life. Excuse my intrusion. The only thing I can do is to leave you immediately."

She turned and quitted the room, shutting the door after her. Then, left alone with him, Hannah sobbed out her bitter humiliation upon Bernard's breast.

He comforted her as well as he could, saying that this must have happened some day; perhaps it was as well it should happen now; and that he did not much care. Still it was evident he did care; that he was considerably annoyed.

"Of course, it increases our perplexities much; for our secret is no longer our own. In her wrath and indignation, she will blab it out to the whole community; unless indeed family pride ties her tongue. But, anyhow, we cannot help ourselves; we must brave it out. Come with me, Hannah."

"Where?"

"Into the next room, to face them all and tell the exact truth. Otherwise we may be overburthened with any quantity of lies. Come, my dear one. You are not afraid?"

"No." She had had all along a vague doubt that when it came to the point he would be ashamed of her and of his love for her. To find that he was not, gave Hannah such comfort that she felt as if she could have walked barefoot over red-hot plough-shares, like some slandered woman of the Middle Ages, if only she might find at the end of her terrible march Bernard's face looking at her as it looked now.

"Yes," she said, "I will come with you at once; for what is told must be told quickly. I cannot stay another night in this house."

"You must, I fear," answered Bernard, gently. "Where would you go to? Not to mine?"

"Oh no, no, I can never go to your house any more."

And the cruel penalties of their position, the chains which bound them on all sides, began to be felt by both in a manner neither had ever felt before. To Hannah it seemed as if she were actually treading between those fiery plough-shares, and she could not have steadied her steps, but for Bernard's supporting hand.

She held to him, literally with the clinging grasp of a child, as they passed across the hall to where, in the fine old drawing-room, like a conclave of the Inquisition, the whole family were assembled.

Lady Rivers had evidently been explaining what she had just heard and seen. Astonishment was upon every face, and but for one accidental circumstance, the presence of Herbert Melville, there might have been a stronger feeling yet: But indecorum being the greatest dread, and prudence the principal characteristic of the Riverses, they were obliged to restrain their wrath within the natural limits of an offended family which has just discovered that one of its members has made a matrimonial engagement without telling them anything about it. Even Lady Rivers, with her widowed son-in-law standing by, was forced more than once to pause and alter her form of speech, dilating more on the wicked secrecy with which Bernard had planned his marriage, than the sort of marriage he was about to make.

When the two culprits walked in, looking agitated enough, but still not exactly like culprits, she stopped—

"Let them speak for themselves, if they have the face to do it," cried she, dropping down in her chair exhausted with vituperation. And then his sisters rushed to Bernard—some angry, some in tears—asking him how he could ever think of doing such a dreadful thing; with his father not yet cold in his grave—their poor, poor father, who would have shuddered at the thought of such a marriage.

It was a hard strait for a man to be in. That he felt it as acutely as so tender a heart could possibly feel, was plain. He turned dead

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pale; but still he never let go of Hannah's hand. She—for a moment she thought of breaking from him and flying out of the house—anywhere—to the world's end—that she might save him from her and her fatal love. Then a wise resolution came—the determination since he had chosen her, to stand by him to the last. By her child, too, for one implied both. Thinking of little Rosie, she was strong again; for no sense of guilt enfeebled her; all she was conscious of was misery—pure misery; and that was at least bearable. She sat down in the chair where Bernard had placed her, still holding him fast by the hand; the only being she had to hold to in the wide world now.

"Sisters," said he at last, speaking very quietly, but as firmly as he could, "what your mother has just found out I intended to have kept back from you till the law made my marriage possible. I knew how you would feel about it—as I felt myself once; but people's minds change."

"So it appears," said Lady Rivers, with a loud sneer. "Especially after living in the same house together—for months and months."

"Especially after living in the same house together—as you say," repeated Bernard, deliberately, though his cheek flamed furiously. "Living in a relation close enough to give us every opportunity of finding out one another's character, and of wishing the tie should be made closer still. I did not love her at first; not for a long time; but once loving her, I love her for ever. What I do—I beg you all to understand—is done not hastily, but deliberately. Long before I ever said a word otherwise than brotherly to Miss Thelluson, or she had any suspicion of what my feelings were, my mind was made up. I shall marry her if I can, believing that both for my own sake and my child's, it is the wisest second marriage I could make—and the most natural."

"Marry her! after living together as brother and sister—or whatever you choose to call it," cried Mrs. Morecomb. "Thomas, dear, did you ever hear of anything so shocking—so improper?"

"The law did not hold it improper," answered Bernard, in extreme irritation. "And as I tell you—at first we had no idea of such a thing. It came upon me unawares. The law should not have placed me in such a position. But it will be broken soon, I trust. And until then you may all rest satisfied; Miss Thelluson will never again enter my house until she enters it as my wife. Then, sisters, whether you like her or not, you must pay her the respect due to a brother's wife, or else I am your brother no longer."

He had taken a high tone—it was wisest; but now he broke down a little. In that familiar home, with the familiar faces round him—two out of them just missing, and for ever—it was hard to go against them all. And when—the gentlemen having prudently stepped out

of the room—the women began sobbing and crying, lamenting over the terrible misfortune which had fallen on the family, things went very sore against Bernard.

"And supposing the bill you talk of does not pass, and you cannot carry out this most unnatural, most indecent marriage," said Lady Rivers; "may I ask what you mean to do? To go abroad, and get married there? as I hear some people do; though afterwards, of course, they are never received in society again? Or, since ladies who can do such unlady-like things must have very easy consciences, perhaps Miss Thelluson will excuse your omitting the ceremony altogether."

Bernard sprang up furious. "If you had not been my father's wife, and my father only this day buried, you and I should never have exchanged another word as long as I lived. As it is, Lady Rivers, say one word more—one word against her—and you will find out how a man feels who sees the woman he loves insulted—even by his own relations. Sisters!" he turned to them, almost entreatingly, as if in his natural flesh and blood he might hope to find some sympathy. "Sisters, just hear me."

But they all turned away, including Bertha, whom poor Adeline had judged rightly as a mere coquette; and who evidently was not at all anxious that brothers-in-law, however convenient to flirt with, should be allowed to marry their deceased wives' sisters. She stood aloof, a pattern of propriety, beside the rest; and even made some sharp, ill-natured remark concerning Hannah, which Hannah heard, and lifted up reproachful eyes to the women whom she had been helping and comforting, and feeling affectionately too, all week, but who now held themselves apart from her, as if she had been the wickedest creature living.

"You know that is untrue, Bertha. I was perfectly sincere in every word I uttered; but, as Mr. Rivers says, people's feelings change. I did not care for him in the least then—but I do now. And if he holds fast by me, I will hold fast by him, in spite of you all."

Slowly, even mournfully, she said this; less like a confession of love than a confession of faith—the troth-plight which, being a righteous one, no human being has a right to break. They stood together—these two, terribly sad and painfully agitated, but still firm in their united strength—stood and faced their enemies.

For enemies, the bitterest any man can have,—those of his own household—undoubtedly Bernard's sisters and their mother now were. It seemed hardly credible that this was the same family who only a few hours ago, had wept together over the same open grave, and comforted one another in the same house of mourning. Now, out of that house, all solemnity, all tenderness, had departed; and it became a house full of rancour, heart-burning, and strife.

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Long the battle raged, and it was a very sore one. A family fight always must be. The combatants know so well each other's weak points. They can plant arrows between the joints of the armour, and inflict wounds from behind; wounds which take years to heal—if ever healed at all. Hannah could hardly have believed that any persons really attached to one another, as these were, could have said to one another so many bitter things within so short a time. Such untrue things also, or such startling travesties of truth; such alterations of facts and misinterpretations of motives, that she sometimes stood aghast and wondered if she had not altogether deceived herself as to right and wrong; and whether she were not the erring wretch they made her out to be. Only her—not him; they loved him; evidently they looked upon him as the innocent victim to her arts—the fly in the spider's web, glad of any generous kindred hand that would come and tear it down, and set him free. Unfortunate Bernard!

He bore it all for a good while—not, perhaps, seeing the whole drift of their arguments—till some chance speech opened his eyes. Then his man's pride rose up at once. He walked across the hearth, and once more took hold of Hannah's hand.

"You may say what you like about me; but if you say one word against her here, you shall repent it all your lives. Now, this must end. I have heard all you have to say, and answered it. Sisters, look here. You may talk as much as you like, seeing you are my sisters, for ten minutes more,"—and he laid his watch on the table, with that curious mixture of authority and good humour which used to make them say Bernard could do anything with anybody. "After that, you must stop. Every man's patience has its limits. I am the head of the house, and can marry whomsoever I choose; and I choose to marry Miss Thelluson, if I have to wait years and years. So, girls, you may as well make up your minds to it. Otherwise, when she is Lady Rivers—as one day she may be—you would find it a little awkward."

He half smiled as he spoke; perhaps he knew them well enough to feel sure that the practical, rather than the sentimental, side was the safest to take them on; perhaps, also, he felt that a smile was better than a furious word or a tear—and both were not far off, for his heart was tender as well as wroth; but the plan answered.

Lady Rivers gave the signal to retire. "For this night, Miss Thelluson, I suppose you will be glad to accept the shelter of our roof; but perhaps you may find it not inconvenient to leave us to-morrow. Until that desirable event, which Bernard seems so sure of, does take place, you will see at once that with my unmarried daughter still under my charge——"

"It will be impossible for you to keep up any acquaintance with me," continued Hannah, calmly. "I quite understand. This good-night will be a permanent good-bye to you all."

Lady Rivers bowed. But she was a prudent woman. It was a perfectly polite bow—as of a lady who was acting not so much of her own volition as from the painful pressure of circumstances.

Hannah rose, and tried to stand without shaking. Her heart was very full. The sense of shame or disgrace was not there;—how could it be, with her conscience clear, and Bernard beside her?—but bitter regret was. She had been with his people so much of late, that sorrow had drawn them closer to her than she had ever believed possible. Likewise, they were his people, and she still tried to believe in the proverb that “blood is thicker than water.”

“I have done you no harm—not one of you,” she said, almost appealingly. “Nor your brother neither. I only loved him. If we are ever married, I shall devote my life to him; if not, it is I that shall suffer. In any case, my life is sad enough. Do not be hard upon me, you that are all so happy.”

And she half extended her hand.

But no one took it. Neither mother nor sisters gave one kind word to this motherless, sisterless woman, whom they knew perfectly well had done nothing wrong—only something foolish. But the foolishness of this world is sometimes higher than its wisdom.

“Good night,” said Bernard; “good night, my dearest. You will find me waiting at the railway at eight o’clock to-morrow morning, to take you direct to Lady Dunsmore’s.”

With a chivalrous tenderness, worthy of his old crusading ancestors—those good knights, pledged to heaven to succour the distressed—he took Hannah by the rejected hand, kissed it before them all, led her to the door, and, closing it upon her, went back to his mother and sisters.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was the dreariest of wet March mornings, more like winter than spring—when they met at the station—those two, whom, if all the eyes of Easterham had been on them, no one would ever have taken for lovers, so grave, so sad, so silent were they. The only attention Bernard paid to her was the common courtesy of any gentleman to a lady—any kind-hearted man to a suffering woman. For that Hannah did suffer, was plain. To rise in the dull dawn of the morning, to breakfast alone, and steal away, unnoticed and uncared-for by any member of the family, was outward humiliation enough; but it was nothing to the inward pain. No wonder that her eyes were heavy and sleepless, her face deadly white, and that even the village doctor whom they met on the platform noticed how very ill Miss Thelluson was looking.

“Yes, she was my sister’s constant nurse, and has been helping

us here through all our trouble," said Bernard, hastily. "She is very much worn out; and I am glad to be taking her back at once to her friend Lady Dunsmore."

Hannah recognised the prudence, and was grateful. Yet still, that there should be this vital need for prudence, for circumspection, for worldly wisdom, was itself a kind of mute disgrace.

The doctor travelled up with them to London; so they had not one word together—Bernard and she—till they found themselves alone in the cab. Then he seized her hand.

"We have but five minutes, my love. Always my love! Remember that; and for my sake forgive all."

"I have nothing to forgive. Thinking as they do, they could scarcely act otherwise than as they do. But, oh, it is hard. I was growing so fond of Easterham—of them too. And now I shall never see the Moat-House or them again."

"Do not be too sure of that," said Bernard, passionately. "You may be back again ere many weeks. Back—in a character in which they must receive you."

And then he explained how he had seen in the day's newspapers that the bill was to be brought up to the House of Lords for the second reading that very night.

"The critical night. Lord Dunsmore has been expecting it for long. There will be a debate; still, I know, he hoped for a majority—small, indeed, but enough to carry it through—enough to save us. Oh, Hannah, if it were right to pray for such a thing—such a common secular thing as a few votes more or less in Parliament—I, a clergyman too."

He laughed; but his eye glittered with excitement. Hannah was almost frightened when she looked at him.

"I am glad the suspense will be ended to-night," he continued. "You see, the trial is harder for me than for most—though, I believe, by Lord Dunsmore's account, that there are hundreds of men in England in my position—waiting till the bill shall pass. But then I am a 'city set on a hill'—like my house, as you used to say to me. A clergyman, contemplating an act which is directly contrary to the canon law, and in which my very bishop—I understand—is dead against me. I shall be excommunicated, of course—that is, suspended—except, by-the-bye, if my marriage ever takes place, it will be according to law; and, then, whatever he thinks, the bishop cannot suspend me. Oh, we care quite as much for the law as the gospel, we clergymen!"

And he laughed again, and still continued rapidly talking in a way very unusual with him. Evidently the trial was becoming past his endurance; and now that there was added the home-warfare—to which he never referred—things would be worse still. Suffering, they say, often changes a woman into an angel; but it is not so

with men—generally quite the contrary. Hannah was so grieved that she hardly answered a word till they reached their destination.

"Stop a minute!" Bernard said. "I had meant to leave you here—and go——"

"Where?"

"Anywhere; it does not matter. But I cannot do it. Oh, Hannah, keep me beside you! I am good then. Could you not invent some nice little falsehood for my staying?"

"Does it need a falsehood to excuse a father's coming to see his own child?" said Hannah, gravely.

"The child—always the child!" he cried. "You care for nobody else. I do believe you are marrying me—if ever we are married—solely for the sake of the child."

Hannah paused a minute before she answered. His conversation was not exactly true, yet there was some truth in it; and to deny truth is always dangerous. She laid her hand on his very tenderly—the tenderness of a love so baptised in sorrow that almost all earthly passion had been washed out of it.

"Bernard, if what you say were true—I do not allow that it is—but if it were, would it be a wicked thing? Would Rosie's mother, or need Rosie's father, be angry with me for it?"

"No, no!" And for the hundredth time, looking at the saintly patience of her face—a face in which, besides love, were written grief, and loss, and resignation—he learnt patience too.

Lady Dunsmore had gone out, and might not be home till dinner-time; but had left a note for Miss Thelluson, in case she returned to-day, which the Countess seemed to have expected.

"Why? Does she guess anything, do you suppose?"

"Everything, I believe," said Hannah. "But she has never breathed one syllable to me, and never will."

"Good, wise, generous woman! We must tell her all to-morrow."

But Hannah only sighed. She had little faith in "to-morrow." People whose lives have been very sunless gradually cease to believe in the sun.

It was a long, long day. They could hardly have got through it but for the child, who with her little imperative queenliness put aside both past and future, and compelled them to live in the present. Desperately in love as he was, Mr. Rivers had a father's heart, and the mother-heart in Hannah kept it alive. Also after the domestic storms of the Moat-House there was something in the innocent peace of the baby-life—so absorbed in little things—which soothed them both. Men might have laughed, but angels would have smiled, to see these two forlorn lovers, who dared not show their love, to whom one another's presence was always a painful restraint—often an actual dread—comforting one another a little in their mutual love of the child.

Lady Dunsmore smiled, too, when she saw them building houses of cards for Rosie on the nursery floor, and then blowing them down with the solemnest of faces; but after the smile she turned away with a tear. She had a heart—this brilliant little woman of the world.

Kissing Hannah, she said a few words of gentle condolence to Mr. Rivers.

"I did not wonder that Miss Thelluson was kept at the Moat-House, she is such a help to everybody in trouble; but I am glad you have brought her back now, and glad you have come to see your little girl. She would have forgotten papa soon. You will stay and dine? We have no guests, for Lord Dunsmore will be at the House. He speaks to-night, if the Marriage Bill comes on for the second reading, as we expect it will."

Bernard made some brief assent.

"See what it is to be a politician's wife," said the countess, turning to Hannah. "All this forenoon I have been acting as amateur whipper-in to get votes for our side. Lord Dunsmore is desperately anxious about it, but very hopeful of the result. He will come straight home with the news; so I shall be most grateful of your company, Mr. Rivers, to congratulate my husband, if he wins—to condole if he fails. But as I said to my thane this morning, when I counselled him to go and murder, not King Law, but the tyrant Injustice—

'Screw your courage to the sticking place
And we'll not fail.'"

She put the matter thus, with her consummate tact and delicate kindness, chattering gaily on, and not waiting for anybody to answer. And all day she kept them up with her gay, witty, continuous talk—a perpetual fountain of prettiness—never by word or look betraying that she guessed anything, that anybody had any anxiety except herself, for the result which this day must bring.

At dinner they were only three; but in the evening one or two people dropped in. Lord Dunsmore's house was always a sort of rendezvous to discuss what was going on in the House, especially when there was pending such a question as this, in which he was known to be strongly interested. His wife, too—her enemies called her a female politician; but even they acknowledged that she pursued her unfeminine *métier* in a most womanly way, and that it was chiefly for her lord's sake, in whose projects she joined heart and soul.

"No," she said, when all the comers and goers had left, and she sat waiting for Lord Dunsmore's return, trying in every way to make the time slip by for those other two, to whom she talked fast, but scarcely looked at them. "No; I hate the word party; I despise heartily those politicians who dare not think for themselves, but must vote as their leader bids them, just as much as I despise those feeble

legislators who, as in this case, are afraid to do good, lest evil might come—to break a bad law, lest good laws might some day be broken. If I were a man, the only question I should ever ask myself would be—is this right or wrong? That once clear, I would risk the rest.”

“Would you?” cried Bernard, leaning forward, strongly excited. He had looked very ill all day—indeed he had owned to Hannah that he was not well, and that before he went home he meant to consult a doctor; but he had the true masculine dislike to be pitied and sympathised with in his ailments, so she asked no more; only she watched him—his changing cheek, his nervous start at every opening of the door, with an anxiety she could not control.

And, as during a pause in his conversation with Lady Dunsmore he turned and asked Hannah rather irritably “why she was so silent?” he little knew what a desperate resolve was forming in her mind, should certain combinations of circumstances force her to it—drive her into the carrying out of that principle, “All for love, and the world well lost.” A resolve which no one would have expected possible for such a quiet woman as she.

Ten o'clock struck—eleven; it was near midnight.

“They are having a long debate; that looks well for our cause,” said Lady Dunsmore; and then a carriage was heard to drive up, and Lord Dunsmore's foot—he was a large, heavy, ponderous man, not easily moved, physically or mentally, but firm as a rock after he did move—was distinctly audible coming up-stairs.

His little bright wife flew to him. “Oh, tell us—I mean, tell me—in two words——”

But he had caught sight of the other two, and looked for the moment as if he wished himself miles and miles away. Still he went up and shook hands with them with a noble affectation of carelessness.

“Pardon. Lady Dunsmore is so anxious about me and my affairs. Well, my dear, there is, unluckily, no news. We have failed this time—beaten; but by the smallest majority yet. Hope on, hope ever! Next session we shall have converted those heretics, and be sure to get our bill through. If we fight on steadily we shall carry our point at last.”

“Of course we shall,” cried the Countess, with a choke in her throat. “No need to be downhearted. The right always wins. Cheer up, Dunsmore!”

And she patted him on the shoulder, never once turning her eyes—they glittered with tears, in spite of her gay tone—to the two behind her.

Hannah stood motionless. She had expected nothing, and was scarcely disappointed; but Bernard stepped forward excitedly.

“Yes, yes, the right always wins. And you made a brilliant speech, Lord Dunsmore. I—I—con—grat——”

An uncomfortable sound rose in his throat, as if he were struggling to articulate, and could not. Then he dropped down, and there was the piteous sight of a strong man swooning dead away. Hannah, as she fell on her knees beside him, and lifted his head, thought for the instant it was real death.

"It has killed him," she said piteously. "He could not bear it—the suspense, I mean; and now—You understand?"

"Yes, I have understood it all along," said Lady Dunsmore gently, and bade her husband lock the door, so as to prevent any one entering for a minute or two. "We will see after him ourselves. Look, he is reviving a little already!"

Bernard sighed. "Oh, Hannah!" he murmured, and stretched out his arms. She opened hers and took him into them, resting his head against her shoulder, so that he could breathe freer, then looked up to her two friends.

"You see how it is? We could not help it. And you do not think us wrong, I know."

"Wrong! Quite the contrary. And I always knew it would happen. Didn't I tell you so?"

That one little triumph—"I told you so!" The Countess could not resist it; but after that she said no more—only helped Hannah, in the kindest and tenderest way, to restore the still half-conscious man. Bernard's illness, however, seemed rather more than an ordinary fainting-fit. When he recovered he wandered in his talk, and scarcely seemed to know where he was.

Then Hannah took at once the motherly part which seems natural to almost all women in cases of sickness—soothing him, tending him, and accepting for him all the arrangements which Lady Dunsmore immediately made, that he should remain in the house. Soon he was able to be half led, half carried, to his room.

"Is it all right, Hannah? You will see that it is all right?" said he, helplessly, and when she answered him in her quieting voice he seemed satisfied, and submitted patiently.

But she had to submit to harder things. When, hearing him call her, she mechanically rose to follow him, Lady Dunsmore detained her.

"Not you; my old housekeeper must be his nurse. Not you."

"But he wants me. He called me."

"Never mind. You cannot go. What would the world say?"

Hannah blushed horribly, then answered in a low, desperate voice, "I care nothing for the world. He is mine. You forget we are engaged; we were to have been married as soon as ever the law allowed. Nobody understands him as I do. Let me go."

"No," said her friend firmly. "He will be taken every care of; but your care he cannot have. For both your sakes, I will not allow it; the world is too wicked. And yet," she added, "the world has common sense on its side. No man or woman, not related, ought

to have been to one another what you and he have been, unless they could be married. You must accept things as they are. I am not cruel to you, but kind."

Hannah knew that. With a stolid patience she did accept her lot, submitting day after day, for a whole week, to the miserable suspense of only hearing second-hand tidings of Bernard's state, of having rights and no rights, of being neither wife nor sister, yet having to endure the agonizing anxiety of both. Not alone, either, in her pain—for Bernard continually sent messages for her to come to him, and Lady Dunsmore would not let her go.

"Cæsar's wife," she said, "must not even be suspected. You are under my protection, and I will protect you to the utmost of my power; but you must also protect yourself. You must give no handle to the bitter tongues which are already beginning to wag about you."

What tongues, she did not state; but Hannah knew. By the manner in which she had often heard other people talked of at the Moat-House, she guessed well enough how the Moat-House would now be talking of her. And the plan which, in the wretchedness of being parted from him, she had already matured, and intended to propose to Bernard as soon as he got well—namely, that, adhering to the letter of the law, and risking all misinterpretation, she should go back with him to Easterham, and resume her place as his sister and housekeeper—faded into thin air.

"You are right," said the Countess, when they discussed, as they did openly now, the actual position of things, and what was the best course to take next. "Such a scheme would never do. The world would never believe in you or him. I can quite understand a woman, conscious of her own innocence, doing the most daring things; but there are things which she has no right to dare. No, my poor Hannah, if ever you are married, you must bring to your husband a spotless name; not a soul must be able to throw a stone at you. And there are those who would stone you to death if they could."

"I know that," said Hannah, sadly; "but perhaps they do not mean it. Don't tell *him*; he loves them."

So spoke she, and tried to believe the best—that circumstances were chiefly in fault, not individuals. But Lady Dunsmore was very angry, especially when, the ill-tidings about Bernard being necessarily sent to Easterham, Bertha and Mrs. Morecamb rushed up, and bemoaned him, and exacted a promise from him that he would come home directly, and let himself be nursed at the Moat-House by his own people. That day he did not ask for Hannah—not once.

She sat in her room, and saw nothing of him—saw almost nobody, except the child. She was painfully aware that every person in the house, servants included, guessed her exact position with regard to Mr. Rivers, and watched her with the eager curiosity with which

almost all people, good and bad alike, follow a domestic tragedy of this sort—a something which cannot be talked of openly, which has all the delightfulness of sin without its dangerous elements.

Thus, when Mr. Rivers at last came down to the drawing-room, Celestine, the Countess's maid, ran into Miss Thelluson's room with the substance of half-a-dozen French novels written in her face, to communicate the event; assuring mademoiselle that monsieur was looking so much better than anybody expected, and she had heard him asking for her; and should she arrange mademoiselle's toilette to the best advantage before she went down-stairs?

But, when really summoned, Hannah crept rather than walked to her lover's presence. There was no joy, no eagerness in her face—only a kind of dreamy thankfulness—until they were alone together, and then he called her to his side.

"Hannah, it was not of your own will that you forsook me?"

"No, no!"

"And you love me still? You will not give me up even after what has befallen us? You understand? For another year, at least, there is no hope of our being married."

"No."

"Isn't it sad and strange—sad and strange?" he continued wistfully, as he lay on the sofa, she holding his hand, for he was very feeble still. "Here are we two, with every blessing under heaven—youth, health, freedom, money—nothing in the world to prevent our being happy; and yet, happy we cannot be. I see no way out of it. Do you?"

For a minute he looked as if he thought she might; but she shook her head, and kept her eyes down on the ground.

"Then the question is, what are we to do? I must go home directly, but it must be without you. Lady Dunsmore tells me so, and I think she is right."

"I think so, too."

"And parting from you, I must also part from my child. You know I promised you I would never claim the child, and I shall keep my word, though I shall miss her sorely. Pretty little Rosie! Still, I will give her up—to you."

"Thank you."

And then, looking at him, the thanks seemed cruel—he was so worn, so weak, so joyless; and it was such a joyless, empty life that he was going back to. He was so helpless, too—the kind of man who always wants a woman to take care of him—to whom marriage is, domestically, not merely a comfort but a necessity; and all his little weaknesses she knew—all his innocent wants she was accustomed to supply.

"Oh, you don't know how I have missed you!" said he, with an almost child-like complaining. "Home has not been like home since

you went away. There was nobody to do anything for me, or when they did it, they did it wrong. Nobody like Hannah. When shall I have you back again?"

"When indeed?"

"And now, when I was ill—when, once or twice, I thought I was dying, and could not get at you—it was so hard. Will you promise"—he lifted himself up, and clutched her hand tight—"promise faithfully that, if I am really dying, you will come to me, whatever the world says?"

"I will;" and he saw by her face that she would. "But you must not die," she added desperately; "you must get well as fast as ever you can. You must take the utmost possible care of yourself, for Rosie's sake—and mine. Oh, Bernard! once I told you to part from me and go and marry another woman, but I could not do it now."

He smiled, and tried to draw her closer to him; but she glanced at the door, and shrank away.

"You don't care for me—you are afraid of caring for me," Bernard said angrily.

"I! not care for you!"

She wept; and, overcome by the weakness of illness, he wept too. It was cruelly hard for them both—as hard as that most pathetic line in the ballad—

"We took but ae kiss, and we tore oursels away."

But that "ae kiss" of theirs had no sin in it—nothing but sorrow.

"Hannah," implored he, "do not forsake me again. "If you knew what a lost creature I am without you—to die without you, or to live without you, is equally dreadful. Can nothing be done? Oh, my dearest! can nothing be done?"

His eyes were so sad, his looks so wan. Even this comparatively trifling illness, following the long mental strain which he must have undergone, had broken him down so completely that Hannah was terrified. There came upon her that mortal dread, which comes upon all who love, and was most natural in her, who had lived to see the grave close over all her nearest and dearest. What if, among all their cares, the one care they never contemplated were to happen? What if Bernard were to fall into ill-health, to sicken and die, and she still parted from him? What if, instead of the long lonely years which both had feared so much, there should be allotted to one of them only a brief space of earthly life; was that space to be spent in separation? Would it not be better to clutch at the vanishing joy—to risk all things, and gain one another?

Under the agony of this fear Hannah was near giving way, and whispering a word or two—offering that fatal sacrifice, which, however he needs it and craves it, no woman has a right to make to any man, not even though it may be one which, as in this case, involves no moral guilt, and concerning which her own conscience may be at

ease entirely. For the sacrifice is not hers alone. He too is involved in it. Nor he only; but the solemn rights of creatures yet unborn—innocent beings who cannot plead and say, "Father, mother, why did you do this? why entail this misery upon us also?"

Whether, noble and pure woman as she was, the motherly heart in Hannah made her faintly hear those voices, with a solemn prevision that no woman ought ever to blush for or to set aside—who knows?—but she hesitated. She could not be the first to propose that marriage abroad which secured nothing at home. Besides, so long as the law was the law, it ought not to be broken.

While she hesitated, Bernard, who had lain silent and thoughtful, said suddenly, in a rather changed tone—the "worldly" tone which she had sometimes remarked in him, the faint reflex of what was so strong in the rest of his family:—

"Perhaps, after all, my going back to my parish work alone, will be the most prudent course; for I may soon have to make some change in it, and indeed in all my outward surroundings. The girls told me that poor Austin has had another series of fits, worse than ever before. Most likely I shall be Sir Bernard before very long."

He sighed—but it was not a heart-deep sigh; one could not expect it to be; and there was something in his look which corresponded to that tone which always jarred upon Hannah. No, "all for love, and the world well lost," was not the creed of any Rivers; if Bernard tried it, the loss would not be by him quite unfelt. Would it by any man, brought up as he had been, and with the nobler half of him never developed at all, till he fell in love with poor Rosa—till he afterwards walked into love, deeply, deliberately, with such a woman as Hannah Thelluson?

Hannah left her passionate words unsaid, and continued their grave and anxious talk—listening to all the plans he made for her and Rosie, in which he showed the utmost thoughtfulness and tenderness. The most likely scheme, and one which Lady Dunsmore had herself suggested, was that, as the young Ladies Dacre were going to the sea-side for a little, Hannah should accompany them, or rather *chaperone* them, taking with her Rosie and Grace. This would be a quiet life, and yet not a life quite shut out of the world. No one could say she was "hiding."

"For you must not hide," Bernard argued; "we must not look as if we were ashamed of ourselves. And you must be somewhere where I can get at you—run down to see my child, of course, whenever it is practicable. Still, you are best a little out of the way too, and not going much into society, for the thing is sure to ooze out."

"How?"

"Oh, though my people pledged me to secrecy 'for the honour of the family,' I know what women's tongues are," said Bernard, bitterly. "Still they dare not say or do much, seeing I shall be Sir Bernard some time; and then— But however things end, I had

rather, whatever may be the curiosity of the world about you, that it was not gratified; but that you lived a rather secluded life. It is best, especially considering how you stand with respect to my family."

"I comprehend you. Yes."

"Oh, Hannah, have I said anything to wound you? But I am placed as it were between two fires. What can I do?"

"Nothing. Nor I. Fate is too much for us; we had better say good-bye for a time. Give me the child and let me go."

And at the moment she felt as if she did not care where she went, or what was done to her. It was all pain; nothing but pain. In her sad life all its natural delights seemed turned into bitterness.

Bernard seized her hands—"Tell me the whole truth. Tell me all that is in your mind about me, or against me—which is it?"

Another minute and she might have said, not at all the tender words that a while ago she had meant to say, but others quite opposite—words which might have placed an eternal barrier between her and the man she loved; who after all was only looking upon their position with a man's eyes—always harder and more worldly than a woman's.

But to save her the door opened, and there burst in with a cry of delight, her Rosie—her "sunshiny child," as she often called her. The little thing, who had been with her papa every day for the last week, climbed upon him in an ecstasy, then turned to Hannah.

"Tannie too, Tannie too! Papa and Tannie kiss Rosie. Both together!"

It was going back to the old ways; childhood and age are alike in clinging to old ways and resisting the smallest change.

"You see," said Bernard, with a smile, "Rosie herself insists upon things being as they used to be—as they ought to be. Rosie herself delights in us 'both together.'"

Hannah said nothing; but, clasping her darling, she laid her weight of secret pain upon the unconscious, childish bosom which was already the receptacle and the comfort of half her woes.

"I will go anywhere, and do anything that you and Lady Dunsmore think best, if I may only have Rosie with me. She'll come, I know?" And Hannah curled round her fingers the soft little ring of silky hair—baby hair which had never been cut, and which netted in its dainty meshes all her motherly heart. "Who loves poor Tannie? Who's Tannie's darling?"

"No; papa's darling," said the child with a pretty waywardness, and then relenting, came and laid her head in her aunt's lap, repeating words which Hannah had forgotten ever having said to her, only she often murmured her soul out over the little crib at night; and Rosie's observation was growing so sharp, and her memory so clear. "No; papa's darling; Tannie's blessing!" Then with a little silvery mischievous laugh, "Blessed tild! Rosie blessed tild!"

Ay, she was a blessed child.

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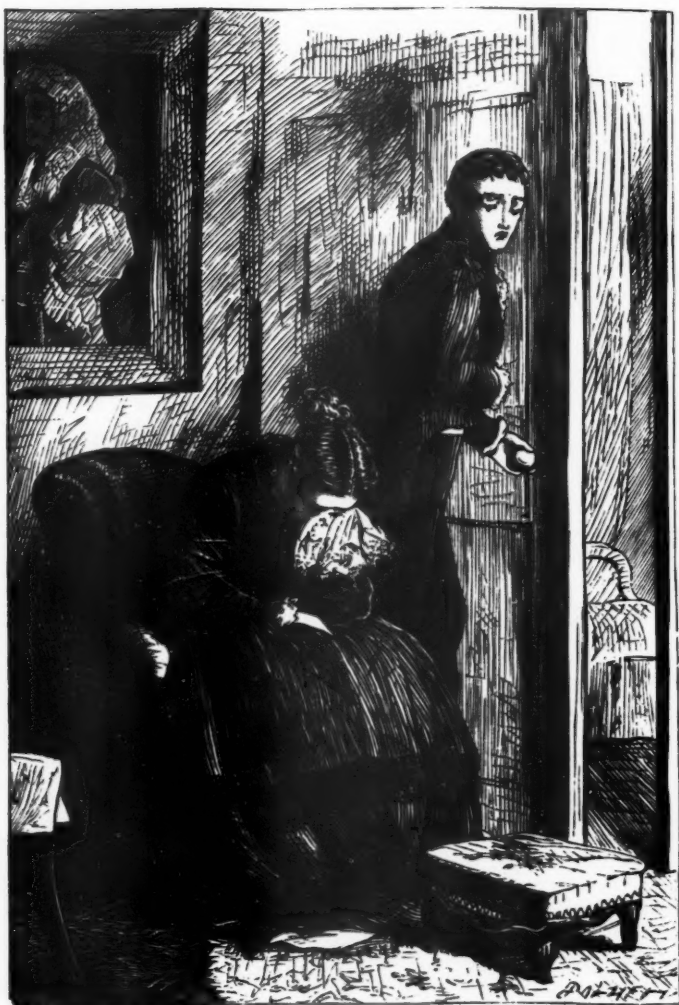
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